

# COMMENTARY

## BREAKTHROUGH IN NORFOLK

*After Five Months Without Public Schools*

ROBERT C. SMITH

**W**HEN the Federal and state courts ended Virginia's "massive resistance" to integration at the end of January, 10,000 Norfolk students, locked out since September, finally went back to school. A great sigh of relief went up in the city. It seemed almost incidental that seventeen Negro students would now be sitting with white students in class, thus making total segregation a thing of the past in Virginia.

Few people in Norfolk expected that there would be violence when the six junior and senior high schools opened on February 2, even though the city had carried out a state policy stopping just short of open defiance of the courts. At the staid old high school named after Commodore Matthew Fontaine Maury, one of Virginia's favorite sons, a crowd of students, reporters, and parents parted to allow a fifteen-year-old Negro student to enter. A few moments later, the

voice of the school's principal, Rufus Tonelson, was heard over the public address system: "We trust that the winter of our discontent . . . is over."

Norfolk's long "winter" of five months had, indeed, been one of discontent. In no other city in the South had the entire secondary school system been shut down, and in none other had as many as one-fourth of the public school students been out of school. The legions of newsmen who rushed down to Norfolk to witness the opening of the integrated schools may have been wondering what sort of place they would find. How could any normal American city continue to live its daily life without having its high schools in operation—and not once voice a mass protest? How could its citizens, when their views were solicited by referendum, have failed to avail themselves of their opportunity to reopen the schools? If all this was any indication of how strongly Norfolk's citizens opposed integration, it was only reasonable to expect trouble on February 2.

The visitors coming from Washington and New York drove to Norfolk along Route 17, following the curving boot of Chesapeake Bay. Others came east along Route 60, following the James River from the capital at Richmond, where Governor Almond was trying to remonstrate with wrathful segregationists in the legislature. To reach Nor-

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folk, situated at the southern end of Hampton Roads, one ordinarily crosses the imposing new bridge-tunnel from the Virginia Peninsula. From the bridge's peak can be seen the great sprawling United States Naval Base, the foundation of Norfolk's economic well-being and the hub of the greatest concentration of permanent naval commands in the world. (Over 200 ships, with an annual payroll of nearly \$60 million, call Norfolk their home port, and 130,000 servicemen and dependents reside in the city.)

From the eastern terminus of the bridge-tunnel, the visitor drives through Ocean View, the city's garish beach playground, its roller coaster gray and solitary in the winter, and turns south on Norfolk's main thoroughfare, Granby Street. Neat middle- and upper-class residences radiate out from either side of Granby Street. To the east are the many new housing developments in Princess Anne County, the city's once rural, but now heavily residential, suburb. To the west lies the waterfront.

The first permanent settlement of English colonists in the New World landed at Cape Henry, only a few miles away from Norfolk, in 1607. The city was shelled in the Revolutionary War by Lord Dunmore, pillaged by the British in the War of 1812, occupied by Federal troops during the Civil War. A block away from a modern school administration building stands St. Paul's Church, which possesses a cannon ball fired by one of Lord Dunmore's warships. In Main Street, where thousands of sailors now travel the circuit of neon-lighted bars, the Marquis de Lafayette once lodged.

**T**HE modern era began in Norfolk with World War I. In 1920, the population reached 115,000, twice what it had been ten years earlier. There was a second war boom under Roosevelt; the population soared from 155,000 in 1940 to 305,000 in 1943, as the city became a chief base for the North Atlantic fleet. When the war was over the navy continued to do business in the port, and many of the newcomers became permanent Norfolk settlers.

The war and postwar expansion had brought dramatic civic changes. A "new Norfolk" was gradually superimposed on the downtown section now known as "Old Norfolk." In the last decade, ancient, lurid slums gave way to rows of trim, low-cost apartment houses—a multi-million dollar project sponsored by the Federal government and the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority. Still standing, hardly a stone's throw away, are the narrow, run-down, airless houses—once red-brick, now black—which extend five blocks east from Granby Street into the heart of Norfolk's Negro community. Nearby, a 15-story ramp-garage and office building, costing \$5 million, is rising on the site of the old City Market, where until two years ago county truck farmers brought their produce and peddled it from carts on littered sidewalks. One senses the new Norfolk in the dusty, acrid odor of the coal docks—here ships bound for foreign ports load the city's main export. The older city can be felt in the fish houses and on the streets among the peanut vendors.

Notwithstanding the imposing new construction and the steady growth of the population, Norfolk still has the transient psychology associated with a sailors' town. Local businessmen have been loath to invest their money at home ever since the navy drastically curtailed its activities in Norfolk after World War I: "You never know when they'll do that again." The core of Norfolk is a small town which outsiders have spurred to sudden, uncalculated growth. Not only are nearly half its 300,000 residents connected with the military; a goodly proportion of the rest are "immigrants," mostly from the nearby rural flatlands of North Carolina. Their presence has led other Virginians to call Norfolk, derisively, "the capital of North Carolina."

The servicemen who lend the city its superficially cosmopolitan air are not easily assimilated by the dominant Old Virginia social structure. A navy commander, for example, may live in the same apartment house as a Norfolk businessman, but he probably does not share the latter's church and civic

affiliations, and he is more likely to vote in his home state than in Norfolk. The newcomers from North Carolina are outsiders in much the same way.

The 75,000 Negroes of Norfolk are perhaps most estranged from the city's affairs—but in their case exclusion is of course enforced rather than self-imposed. Hardly 4,000 of them vote, and there are no Negroes on any major community political body, which is unusual even for Virginia (there are several in Richmond). In short, the white and Negro communities are about as compartmentalized as is humanly possible, and a frequent complaint heard from Negroes is, "We don't feel that we have any say at all." The Negro community fans out along Church Street, several blocks east of Granby Street, and fills the gaps in the older residential areas left by the whites who had moved away to the suburbs. Church Street serves as the Negro's Granby Street. It is a measure of the Negro's condition in the 1950's that Negroes often do shop along Granby Street, even though they spend far more time in the stores on Church Street, where there are no white shoppers.

Because the Negro, the serviceman, and the "immigrant" play a small part in civic affairs, "Old Norfolk" still wields decisive power in the city government. It is run by solid businessmen who, however advanced they are in their business methods, are deeply conservative still in their social thinking. The city's leaders, almost without exception, support the state Democratic organization which is led by Senator Byrd; this gentlemanly, self-perpetuating political brotherhood has dominated Virginia since the 1930's.

NEVERTHELESS, even before the Supreme Court's decision to desegregate the schools, Norfolk had been regarded as somewhat atypical by Virginia political observers. In 1948, for instance, a "reform" ticket was elected to head the city administration for a brief period. In 1953, the city voted for the Republican Ted Dalton against Byrd's choice for Governor, the colorless Tom Stanley—

who was elected, notwithstanding. These lapses from orthodoxy, as well as Norfolk's relatively lower percentage of "real Virginians," caused politicians to view the city suspiciously when the Supreme Court decision was handed down. For it seemed obvious that, of all the state's communities, integration was most likely to take hold in Norfolk, or in Alexandria and Arlington, the northern Virginia suburbs influenced by Washington. Segregationist politicians from Southside Virginia, the southern strip of the state where the Negro population is quite high, were dismayed when Norfolk's Superintendent of Schools, J. J. Brewbaker, described the relative ease with which integration could be accomplished in his city: because of the tight residential segregation, only a few Negro students would have to be admitted to white schools. Even this was too much for extreme segregationists.

The decisive turn in state policy, which was to lead to closed schools in Norfolk two years later, came in the early months of 1956. The so-called Gray plan, devised by a legislative commission, had previously been approved in a state-wide referendum. But segregationists regarded it as dangerous because it would have permitted a degree of integration at local option. By the time the General Assembly met in 1956, the cry of the Southside legislators was: "A little integration will open the floodgates to race amalgamation." Despite opposition from Norfolk and northern Virginia, the legislature abandoned the Gray plan and enacted in its place a whole package of "massive resistance" laws aimed at blocking integration anywhere in the state, even at the cost of closing the schools.

The change in state policy may be explained as the result of national as well as state politics. There is little doubt that Senator Byrd firmly believed in total segregation. Even token integration in a few Virginia communities would have involved loss of prestige for Byrd among his fellow Southern Senators, who looked to Virginia for leadership in blocking implementation of the Supreme Court decisions. Massive re-

sistance also seemed to be the better part of political wisdom for the Byrd organization in Virginia itself. There was, furthermore, a kind of intellectual ferment among segregationists in Virginia. In a series of editorials which attracted national attention, J. J. Kilpatrick, the editor of the *Richmond News Leader*, had expounded the doctrine of "interposition," and urged the state of Virginia to set its authority against the application of the "illegal" decisions of the Supreme Court.

All these factors, which enabled the Southside politicians to triumph in the General Assembly of 1956, led in 1957 to the election of J. Lindsay Almond as Governor, to replace Stanley. Almond campaigned on the platform of massive resistance, and was elected easily. The Byrd machine, which had been sputtering when Stanley barely won election four years before, now seemed smoothly oiled. Byrd and Almond were embarked on the course which led them, this winter, to a dramatic crossroads—and, perhaps, to a parting of the ways.

**I**T WAS obvious that "massive resistance" could not long go unchallenged. Desegregation suits were filed by Negroes in Prince Edward County, Norfolk, Charlottesville, Arlington, and later, Warren County. By the time these test cases had reached the higher courts, only one section of the resistance package had any significance. Under its provisions, the Governor could close any school when a court ordered the admission of a single Negro child. The Governor could, upon the petition of the city council and school board of the community affected, then permit the school to re-open as an integrated institution. But, if he did so, state funds for all the community's schools of that level (primary or secondary, as the case might be) were automatically suspended.

By the middle of last summer, it was apparent that Norfolk would be a test case for "massive resistance" in September. Arlington had gained a delay until February; the case in Prince Edward lagged. As the opening day of school approached in Norfolk, 151 Negro students applied to the six

white junior and senior high schools. The Norfolk school board rejected all the Negro applicants. Upon appeal, Federal Judge Walter E. Hoffman of Norfolk sent the cases back to the board with orders to reconsider. He was willing to accept some of the criteria for rejecting the Negro pupils—low academic standing, for one—but he rejected the others, among them the contention, made famous in Little Rock, that integration might pose a threat of disorder. "If this obtains," Judge Hoffman said, "what is left of the Supreme Court decision?" The school board then assigned 17 Negro children to the six schools.

Until the last moment, most Norfolkkians hoped that a showdown would be averted. Some believed that the state would retreat once it came to closing the schools. Others thought that the court would grant a stay of its order of integration, as it had done once before, in 1957. Finally, however, the day came when the elementary schools opened, segregated, and the white junior and senior high schools remained closed.

The initial reaction of a stunned silence was followed by a trickle of protests. There were some angry letters to the newspapers, and a few scattered PTA actions. Students at two of the closed high schools mounted placards and signed petitions in favor of opening the schools. "We take an unbiased stand on the issue of public school integration," one of the placards read. Some visiting reporters were surprised by the city's relative calm; but vociferous protests are uncommon in Virginia, where there is a habit of letting the state government have its way. Moreover, most parents still believed that, somehow or other, the schools would reopen within a few days. "After all, it's not as though this was Little Rock, violence and all," one parent said.

It was not, indeed, Little Rock. More schools were closed and fewer preparations had been made. The only organization which had been lining up substitute facilities for closed schools was the Tidewater Educational Foundation, an offshoot of the segregationist Defenders of State Sovereignty

and Individual Liberties.\* The TEF claimed at one point that it had the physical facilities to accommodate 5,000 students, but it did not have the teachers: the Norfolk teachers organization refused to serve this all-out segregationist group.

The neighborhood tutoring groups which soon sprang up did, on the other hand, have the support of teachers from the closed schools. Telephone networks were created, almost overnight, in every subdivision of Norfolk. Parents spread the word that classes would be meeting in the nearest church—from fastidious Ghent to flamboyant Ocean View. The general air of excitement was suggested by a parent who said he and his wife felt like “conspirators” when they received a call that a group was being set up in their neighborhood. “When we got to the address, a lady came out and we asked ‘Is this where the group meets?’” These parents enrolled their sixteen-year-old son in a Methodist Church tutoring school, a few meetings later. The boy could study only those subjects for which teachers had been found—in his case social studies, Latin, mathematics, and English. His father was billed \$20 a month, which served to pay the teachers, as well as provide janitorial services and utilities which the church lacked. Without any planned coordination among them, the dozens of tutoring groups that sprang up all operated much the same way.

Altogether, about 4,200 students were accommodated by the tutoring system. Another 900 enrolled in a special night school established in South Norfolk. Five hundred more were scattered about in public schools on the outskirts of the city. The TEF’s program, delayed for weeks, finally took care of 270 students, taught by 12 teachers, most of whom had been retired. About 4,000 students remained who had not availed themselves of these facilities in the Norfolk area. Some of those were sent to private schools, scattered over 28 states from Connecticut to California. A number of the

children were boarded out with relatives to attend public schools in other communities. It was estimated that a total of 2,500 white students stayed away from any school.

**M**EANWHILE, the Negro schools remained open. The 17 Negro applicants to white schools could not, even if they had wished, enroll in them. To do so would have meant requesting reassignment from the school board—a reassignment which might seriously have impaired their legal standing. A special tutoring school was established for the seventeen by an indefatigable educator, Mrs. Vivian Carter Mason, who provided the moral counseling, in addition to the three R’s, which she thought necessary for her pupils against the moment when integration “finally came.”

Estimates differ as to how well the various tutoring groups did the required job. Some parents seemed pleased with the possible advantages their children got from the smaller classes—others were uneasy at the limited number of courses, and the absence of normal extra-curricular activities. Superintendent Brewbaker has since ruled that normal credits would be granted for the tutoring schoolwork. During the fall, parents had feared this would not be so, and they became even more restive when, shortly before the denouement, the Norfolk Education Association, as spokesman for the teachers, voted to discontinue tutoring in February. The teachers had sensed that the community was becoming complacent about the padlocked public schools, and growing accustomed to the idea of the substitute tutorial services.

Inconvenience, worry, and what the teachers themselves characterized as slapdash education, were not the only disadvantages of the makeshift arrangements. Many parents felt a serious financial strain. One mother was forced to take a full-time job in order to help send her daughter to a private school at Virginia Beach and her son to a military school in Florida. The total expenses caused the parents to reflect, sadly, that they were spending on school what

\*See “Virginia Jewry in the School Crisis,” by Murray Friedman, COMMENTARY, January 1959.

they had planned for college. Or there was the case of the naval commander who was laying out \$250 a month to send his two sons to a private academy in North Carolina. Such instances were not uncommon.

In the circumstances, it was easy to understand why many students simply stayed home. Parents who mistrusted the tutoring groups and could afford private education preferred to believe that the schools would open any day. Once they had waited a few weeks, they found it impossible to enroll their children anywhere. As for the borderline academic cases, who might or might not have finished high school, they now had an excellent excuse to drop out permanently. "I'm going to go into the Air Force next year anyway," said one student who would have been a senior this year. "I'll finish my education there."

Community life was relatively unaffected by the closings, and family activities tended to replace some of the social functions of the schools. The closed high schools still managed to compete enthusiastically on the football fields. Nor did juvenile delinquency show any increase, according to Lieutenant Ray P. Racine, head of the Norfolk Police Division's Youth Bureau. "I think that the fact that many of them attended school at night and on Saturdays kept them out of trouble," he said.

As the stalemate continued, tensions within the community heightened. The city council, led by Norfolk's quick-tempered Mayor, W. Fred Duckworth, was flatly hostile to any idea of opening the schools. On one occasion the Mayor tried to get the teachers to abandon their boycott of the TEF, and demanded that they hear its president, James G. Martin, IV. The teachers consented, but treated Martin coolly, which led him to exclaim, "I just don't understand those teachers!" Mayor Duckworth was even angrier at the rebuff.

In the struggle that developed over the re-opening of the schools, the Mayor and the city council were on one side, the school board on the other. The educators urged the

council to join it in petitioning the Governor to re-open the schools, as the state resistance law required. In answer, the council called for a city-wide referendum on whether to petition or stand pat. "It would be well for the school board to stay out of politics on this issue," Duckworth admonished the board members at a public meeting. To which one of the board, Benjamin Willis, replied afterward: "I'll wear no man's muzzle."

Neither the council nor the board campaigned as such in the referendum. The task of urging the re-opening of the schools fell to the Norfolk Committee for Public Schools, an *ad hoc* group formed during the crisis; the Defenders led the fight to continue massive resistance. The Defenders matched the Committee's speeches, disclaimed any part in the distribution of the violently racist literature which suddenly appeared in many residential sections of the city, worked skillfully at the polls on November 18, and took a major share of the credit for the outcome: a 3-2 victory for standing pat. Yet it is noteworthy that few prominent leaders of the Norfolk community were identified with either the Defenders or the opposing Committee. The two groups probably had less influence on the election result than did a general feeling of helplessness. "The courts will have to settle this," was a common view.

It should be observed that in each of the last three elections in Norfolk—all of them connected in some way with massive resistance—the Byrd organization won by a 3-2 margin. In each, about 20,000 Norfolk voters went to the polls. This was the electorate that chose Governor Almond over Dalton in 1957 and Senator Byrd himself over the independent, Dr. Louise Wensel, earlier last year—and this was the electorate that chose resistance to integration in the city referendum.

By the normal calculations of American politics, in a city of 300,000 people, roughly 100,000 may be expected to vote—five times as many as customarily go to the polls in Norfolk. The "transient" psychology has

resulted in voters' apathy, but the poll tax has played the greater negative role. The poll tax must have been paid for three years prior to any election, and the final payment must have been made a full six months before election day.

Only 49,000 voters had paid their poll taxes early enough to be eligible to vote in the school referendum, and many of the ineligible were parents of children whose schools had been closed. Even so, less than half of those who had paid their tax voted. The only explanation for this is the general lassitude toward voting, which is infectious in a state which has long been dominated not only by one party but by a single political machine. Almost all the parents whom I interviewed after the referendum told me that they were in favor of re-opening the schools; yet less than half of them had voted in the referendum. "I knew it would be a waste of time," seemed to be the general attitude, voiced by one respected professional man.

The Negro vote in the referendum—about 3,000—was considerably smaller than in some previous elections. P. B. Young, Sr., Negro newspaper publisher, ascribed this, too, to a "sense of futility" about state politics. "The only thing the Negro in Virginia has faith in is the courts," he said. "He doesn't have much to choose from in voting; one candidate is about as lily white as the next."

A survey sponsored by the city four years ago indicates precisely who the 20,000 repeating voters are. It showed that only 2.7 per cent of registered voters who had paid the poll tax were less than thirty years of age. The typical Norfolk voter was almost fifty years old, economically comfortable, and a resident of Old Norfolk. "You can really count on these voters," remarked Kenneth Harris, an artist and one of the leaders of the movement to open the schools. "If the administration proposed to put alligators in the Elizabeth River, they would approve it, 3-2."

The referendum emboldened the city council in its program of resistance. First,

Councilman Lewis Layton made several public attempts to persuade the Negro leaders and parents to have the 17 school applicants withdraw. When this failed, the council adopted a 1959 school budget providing that only the council—not the school board—could appropriate funds. On January 13 the council adopted another resolution threatening to cut off funds for all school grades between seven and twelve. (This involved some elementary school classes which had not previously been affected by junior high closings.) If this plan had been executed, an additional 7,000 students—5,000 of them in the Negro schools which had previously been immune—would have been locked out in February.

The council may have gone too far in announcing this action; Mayor Duckworth had once declared that "17 Negro children are keeping 10,000 whites out of school," and so there was a distinct odor of revenge about his new threat. Even worse, it seemed to foreshadow the closing of all the schools, and PTA's which had up to then remained silent now denounced the move. Letters to the editor in the *Virginian-Pilot* ran heavily against the city council.

**T**HERE were other signs appearing throughout the state that resistance had run its course. A suit in Federal court was aimed at compelling the state to re-open its schools; the state itself was testing the entire "resistance" package in the Virginia Supreme Court; in Norfolk, the city council's plan to withhold funds from the school board was being challenged in court by white parents. Meanwhile, such respected economists as Dr. Lorin Thompson, of the University of Virginia, were warning that extended school closings would drive potential business and industry out of Virginia. Underwriters reported that the market for Southern school bonds was "sticky," and that the bonds were selling at lower prices than comparable issues from other school districts. Furthermore, taxpayers soon became aware that it was costing the state \$172,000 a month (chiefly to pay 450 idle teachers)

just to keep the schools closed in Norfolk.

This combination of legal and economic perils had shaken the segregationists. Even J. J. Kilpatrick, the advocate of "interposition," was calling for a change of tactics: "I especially object to being defeated by our own bullheadedness . . . if we cling much longer to the futile and ineffective tactics on which we now rely." There was, in particular, fear of one very grave economic reprisal. Navy officials repeatedly—and ominously—declared that they had neither the authority nor the inclination to set up their own school system for servicemen's children. Businessmen, realizing that the military is responsible for 80 per cent of basic employment in the Norfolk area, well knew it would be catastrophic for them if the school situation hastened a deployment of naval forces elsewhere.

At this juncture an advertisement appeared in the *Virginian-Pilot* and *Ledger Dispatch* which urged the city council to open the schools. This was not in itself significant. In this case, however, the statement bore the signatures of 100 top-drawer business leaders, the bluechip names of Norfolk—and the very men whose previous silence had created such a void of opinion. The Reverend James Brewer, the Unitarian minister who headed the Committee for Public Schools, had tried to get some of them to speak out before the referendum, but had been able to elicit only the dubious support of "I'm with you but don't use my name!" Most of these men were loyal Byrd supporters who had been willing enough to give the Almond administration a chance to carry out its policies. Now they had rebelled openly, and Almond would have to re-assess his course. What happened in Norfolk was also happening in high business echelons elsewhere. There were several "top secret" meetings of business leaders throughout the state, and the message that emerged from all of them was that Virginia could not be permitted to endanger its economic growth by civic disarray. Governor Almond knew about these meetings, and they obviously had a profound influence on

the decision he had to make when the legal basis of "massive resistance" crumbled late in January.

Before the Norfolk city council could go through with its extremist plans, the courts intervened with a triple blow. Within a few days, Federal courts ordered Norfolk to re-open its schools, and they also blocked the city council's effort to withhold funds from the school board. At the same time, the Virginia Supreme Court ruled that the massive-resistance laws violated the state constitution, which since Reconstruction has guaranteed free public education.

**A**S THE Norfolk school board prepared to open its schools, Governor Almond addressed a session of the legislature which had been hastily convened in Richmond. There was no way, he announced, to prevent immediate integration in Norfolk and Arlington—thus acknowledging the collapse of massive resistance. He would appoint a commission to study future actions; but for the moment the legislators would have to settle for peripheral measures, such as laws to prevent any white child from being compelled to attend an integrated school against his will.

The Southside segregationists caucused and brought forth a battery of extremist measures; one of them would have closed the entire public school system in the state until a fire safety inspection could be made. But Governor Almond knew he had enough organization votes to block such measures and rejected them. In Washington, Senator Byrd, who had praised all of Almond's fire-eating segregationist speeches in the past, was significantly silent. His son, Harry, Jr., voted with the last-ditch resisters in the legislature. The Senator apparently did not intend to comment until he saw the public reaction to the Governor's new policy.

In Norfolk, the city council restored education to the authority of the school board. "We're out of the school business," announced Mayor Duckworth. Afterward, he seemed more relaxed than he had been in weeks. "We fought them right down to the

last ditch, even in the ditch," he told friends.

As "integration Monday" approached, there was some tension in the Negro community. "You never can be sure," was the prevailing attitude. The families of the 17 students to be integrated received more calls than usual from well-wishers—though none at all from the whites who had previously asked them to withdraw their applications. As for the Negro children themselves, their tutor, Mrs. Mason, spoke for them: "They were ready. I had told them they had lost their childhood when they agreed to file the suit for desegregation, that they had to be adults now."

Norfolk was as prepared for the end of segregated education as a Southern community could be. Five months without any public schools had numbed the emotional impact of the word "integration." The important thing was that the schools were about to be opened again. Student leaders purchased an ad in the newspapers calling for calm and dignity when the schools opened. "That was the best thing anyone could have done," Harold Anderson, the chief of police stated. Nevertheless, he put a heavy cordon of men, most of them in plain clothes, around the six schools.

Superintendent Brewbaker's estimate that three-fourths of the white students would return proved reasonably accurate. To date, about 7,000 youngsters of the "lost class" have come back. About a fourth of these did not attend any classes during the crisis. Edwin Lamberth, the city's Director of Instruction, fears that many of the brightest students were among those who did not return. "Many boys and girls who were clearly headed for college were sent to private schools and won't be back," he said. Many in the tutoring groups, Lamberth observed, lost considerable time because they were unable to take essential courses.

The actual process of school integration in Norfolk took place so quietly that reporters found little to write about. In Arlington, the process was described as "humdrum." Since then, Alexandria schools have been integrated without disturbance. The 17 Negro students in what used to be the white school system of Norfolk have suffered no ill-treatment beyond an occasional school-boy slur. Few Norfolkians had expected anything worse. "I would have been shocked if any violence had occurred in Norfolk," a Negro leader told me. "At heart, it's really a nice quiet town."

# WASHINGTON: SHOWCASE OF INTEGRATION

## *A Progress Report*

ERWIN KNOLL

FOLLOWING the collapse of Virginia's "massive resistance" to public school desegregation in the face of adverse court decisions, Governor J. Lindsay Almond, Jr., took to the airwaves to state his case against racial integration. He addressed some of his comments "to those who defend or close their eyes to the livid stench of sadism, sex, immorality, and juvenile pregnancy infesting the mixed schools of the District of Columbia and elsewhere." A week earlier, Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas told his constituents that children locked out of Little Rock's closed Central High School could lose an entire year of schooling, if need be, and "still be educationally ahead of students in integrated Washington, D. C."

Ever since President Eisenhower voiced the hope in 1954 that integration in the capital would be a "model" to the nation, Washington's school system has been a whipping boy for segregationists. Two years ago a newspaper in Richmond, Virginia, devoted a 16-page tabloid section to desegregation in the District of Columbia and concluded that Washington is "a city of seething unrest: a chaotic area of flux and movement, uneasy and unstable. . . . It is a city where many white families who remain, imprisoned, hesitate to talk for fear of violent reprisal." More recently, a hate sheet published in Inglewood, California, told its readers that

"in Washington's integrated schools, armed police now patrol the halls to protect white students and teachers from Negro jungle violence. Slashings, knifings, assaults, indecent exposures, and sex incidents are so rampant throughout the District's integrated system that white students are virtually deserting the schools en masse."

For a long time, Washington's school authorities avoided making direct replies to these charges, but school Superintendent Carl F. Hansen and Walter N. Tobriner, an attorney who serves as president of the Board of Education, found it "impossible to ignore" Governor Almond's comment. They described it as "a gratuitous and intemperate attack upon the innate decency of 114,000 children and youth in our public schools," and declared that "the public school system of the District of Columbia is an outstanding example of how education serves to improve citizenship, thus demonstrating the value of public education to the community and the nation."

No one familiar with public education in Washington would suggest that school desegregation was easy and effortless. But almost five years have passed since the Supreme Court decision, and some have forgotten the problems of segregation. They were vexing, indeed, and integration provided an answer. Residents recall no community conflict in the past four years which matched the intensity of the recurrent crises in the period before integration.

Washington had been operating two separate, racially segregated public school systems for more than ninety years when the Supreme Court ruled on May 17, 1954, that "segregation in public education is not reasonably related to any proper governmental objective, and thus it imposes on Negro

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children of the District of Columbia a burden that constitutes an arbitrary deprivation of their liberty in violation of the due process clause." The decision climaxed years of litigation and conflict.

Hobart M. Corning, who retired last year as school superintendent, told the Board of Education in 1947: "Because of the unusually serious crowding of the schools, tensions and evidences of extreme unrest are already occurring within the city." Total enrollment in the district's public schools was about the same at the end of the war as it had been at the beginning—92,000 pupils. But school construction had virtually stood still during the war years, and there were about 6,000 fewer white students in the schools and 6,000 more Negroes. The result was what Brigadier General Gordon R. Young, the District Engineer Commissioner, described as "a remarkable mixture of modern and antiquated buildings and equipment, and . . . an acute but unbalanced shortage of space."

**A**BOUT 7,000 Washington youngsters were on half-sessions in double-shift schools in 1946. More than 6,000 of them were Negroes. The schools were distinctly separate, but they were hardly equal. The average white elementary school class had less than 35 pupils; the average Negro class, almost 39. Even greater disparities existed at the junior and senior high school levels. In some Negro schools, as many as 50 pupils were jammed into a classroom. Bad feelings mounted as Negro children walked past under-capacity white schools to attend overcrowded buildings.

In 1948, District Appropriations Subcommittees of the Senate and House of Representatives ordered a thorough survey of the District schools. A staff of experts headed by George D. Strayer subjected the system to exhaustive scrutiny. Their report, published in 1949, included these findings: the average white high school teacher was teaching 548 pupil-hours per week, while the average Negro high school teacher was teaching 711 pupil-hours; 25 per cent of

the white school buildings and 40 per cent of the Negro schools were 50 years or older; 67.9 per cent of the white elementary classes and 88.1 per cent of the Negro classes had more than 30 pupils; 18 per cent of the white classes and 40.3 per cent of the Negro classes had more than 40 pupils. "It is the confirmed judgment of the survey staff," Strayer wrote, "that modern standards of education and training are rarely achieved under such conditions of heavy overload." He recommended a \$40 million school construction program, with more than 75 per cent to be allocated to the Negro schools.

The school administration was cognizant of its responsibilities. In 1947, when fewer than 45 per cent of the pupils were Negroes, 72 per cent of the construction budget was assigned to Negro schools. The effort to close the gap continued in succeeding years. Furthermore, 21 white schools were turned over to the Negro division in the last few years before desegregation. Almost all of these transfers were accompanied by racial antagonisms. White parents resented losing the schools their children attended. Negroes resented "hand-me-down schools." These resentments were reflected in strikes by Negro students, picketing of school offices by parents, lawsuits citing inferior buildings, part-time schooling, and lack of kindergarten facilities for Negroes.

Despite their efforts, the schools could not keep up with the building need. In 1952, after five years of concerted emphasis on catching up, average classroom loads were somewhat lower in the white schools but hardly reduced at all in the Negro division. The inequities and the periodic school-transfer disputes were resolved only when schools were desegregated. This year, classes for all of the city's pupils are substantially smaller than they were five years ago, despite a steady enrollment increase.

In 1954, before the Supreme Court handed down its decision, a study by the Fund for the Advancement of Education found that "by any measurement, the Negro division of the Washington school system has remained inferior to the white. Continu-

ing effort to superimpose a rigidly segregated school system on a rapidly shifting residential pattern has made crises—financial and otherwise—the norm in Washington schools.” There was, for instance, the problem of budgeting school operating costs. In the voteless capital, school funds are appropriated by Congress by means of a cumbersome budget process which begins two years before the money is to be spent. Since white enrollments were dropping steadily while Negro enrollments increased, a built-in gap existed in the per-pupil allocation for the white and Negro divisions. In the last year of segregation, the District invested \$240.27 in the instruction of each white student and \$186.17 in the instruction of each Negro, according to figures compiled by the United States Office of Education. Inevitably, special educational services were inferior in the Negro schools. Official statistics for the 1953-54 school year show that there were 21,586 pupils in the white elementary schools; special classes, staffed by 79 teachers, were available to 813 handicapped pupils. At the same time there were 31,044 pupils in the Negro elementary schools; special classes, staffed by 34 teachers, were available to 531 handicapped pupils.

There were even problems in school athletics. Negro high school teams went to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York to fill out baseball and football schedules because there were no teams for them to play against in the Washington area. The Negro schools had the city’s best football stadium, while white students had the best basketball gymnasium. Only Negro students participated in swimming meets because only Negro schools had indoor pools.

**T**HERE were the increasingly embarrassing incidents, such as the occasion in 1950 when the Washington Sesquicentennial Commission’s drama, *Faith of Our Fathers*, was barred from a white high school because the cast contained two Negro actors. “Segregation was a harmful luxury,” Assistant School Superintendent Francis A. Gregory commented recently. “It hurt not only those

who were denied, but also those who were privileged.”

There were the far-reaching problems of school administration. In 1949, for instance, the Strayer survey found “marked differences” between the research departments which tested white and Negro students. Strayer wrote: “There can be no justification in maintaining two departments of research. Such a plan is unsound administratively and makes for a much less effective functional organization.” Strayer also found it “unnecessary and illogical” to have separate boards of examiners administer dissimilar examinations to white and Negro applicants for teaching licenses. But the Strayer recommendations were not put into effect until the entire school system was desegregated. Up to the end of segregation, the only system-wide jobs in the Washington schools were held by six white officials: the superintendent, the business administrator, the food services director, the attendance director, and associate superintendents in charge of personnel and of buildings. White officials rarely set foot in the Negro schools except on ceremonial occasions. Negro educators never entered white buildings except to attend after-school conferences. Assistant Superintendent Gregory, formerly an administrator in the Negro division, comments: “Synchronization of educational planning was impossible so long as one division hardly knew what was going on in the other.”

Washington school officials moved with more than deliberate speed to comply with the Supreme Court decision. Just a week after the Court handed down its edict, the Board of Education approved a plan to integrate the two separate school systems.

It now appears that Washington educators may have overestimated the human relations problems involved in desegregation. When the Board of Education began putting its plans into effect in September 1954, few of the expected frictions and incidents materialized. On the other hand, the schools underestimated the educational problems which would accompany desegregation. When city-wide pupil achievement tests

were made public in 1955, they revealed staggering deficiencies as an aftermath of segregated schooling.

In March 1956, a Georgia Congressman on the House District of Columbia Committee, Representative James C. Davis, declared that desegregation in the capital was "not only a scholastic failure, but—as an experiment in human relations—a nightmare." Several months later Davis launched a full-scale Congressional investigation to bear out his conclusions. Three other Southern Congressmen joined him as signers of a report which declared: "We are of the opinion that the act of integrating the former Division I (white) and Division II (Negro) schools has seriously damaged the public school system in the District of Columbia. The evidence, taken as a whole, points to a definite impairment of educational opportunities for members of both white and Negro races as a result of integration, with little prospect of remedy in the future."

Two Republicans on the Davis Subcommittee—Representatives A. L. Miller of Nebraska and DeWitt S. Hyde of Maryland—disagreed with the Southern majority. They said the report drew unwarranted conclusions from evidence which "does not appear to be well-balanced or objective." Nonetheless, the majority report—with the minority dissent deleted—has been reprinted by the thousands and widely distributed throughout the South. In a television appearance during the Little Rock crisis, Governor Faubus urged his audience to write for copies.

The Davis report has gained wide acceptance in the Southern states resisting school desegregation. For lack of effective rebuttal, even some "moderates" have come to believe the major conclusions of the report: that school desegregation in Washington has resulted in a mass exodus of white families from the city; that scholastic standards have been lowered; that juvenile delinquency and vice flourish in the integrated schools; that racial tensions have mounted in the classroom and in the city. Each of these points is worth examination in detail.

NO SCIENTIFIC tabulation can be made of the motives which have sent many white Washington families to the suburbs and brought many Negro families into the city, but two facts indicate that school desegregation was not a major factor in the shift: the change in the capital's racial composition began some twenty years before the schools were integrated, and a similar change is taking place in cities North and South, including some which never had school segregation and some which have it still.

The 1956 Davis report decried the preponderance of Negro pupils and asserted that "just a few years ago" 59,582 white students and 33,498 Negroes were enrolled. Official enrollment records show that "a few years ago" was November 1, 1935. The date was well chosen; it marked an all-time high in white enrollment in the District schools. The figure has been dropping steadily ever since. The movement of white families to the suburbs began as the depression ended, and was accelerated as war and postwar prosperity put auto ownership and home purchase within the reach of many who could not afford to make the move before. By the end of World War II there were about 50,000 white students and almost 40,000 Negroes in the District schools. In 1950, four years before the desegregation decision, Negroes constituted the majority of the enrollment.

These figures are not proportional to the capital's total population. This year about 45 per cent of Washington residents are Negroes, though they contribute about 74.1 per cent of the school population. Part of the reason is the higher birth rate of Negroes who come to the District from Southern rural areas. On the other hand, single persons and childless couples represent an unusually high proportion of Washington's government-centered white population. The enrollment of white children in private and parochial schools surely does not account for the disparity. Some 19,000 Washington children, white and Negro, are enrolled in non-public schools this year. The number, as a percentage of total school population, has

actually decreased since the public schools were integrated.

Washington has not been unique in experiencing an influx of low-income Negroes into deteriorating downtown neighborhoods. For a generation, Negro families from the rural South have been moving into urban centers in search of economic opportunities. But the in-migration has been heavy in the capital, which has been for many "the first place to get off the bus." Two years ago the District schools compiled an analysis of pupils who had transferred from other school systems. It showed that some 6,000 students had come from 47 states—almost half of them, however, from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and neighboring Virginia. No comparable Negro in-migration has been experienced by the suburban areas, where real estate opportunities for Negroes are virtually non-existent. The run-down sections of the central city have born the full impact of the influx.

**I**N THEIR recent book, *The Exploding Metropolis*, the editors of Fortune cited comparable figures for other cities: "New York City today has a net in-migration of 30,000 Puerto Ricans and 10,000 Negroes annually. Something like 50,000 whites appear to be leaving the city every year. Chicago's Negro population is increasing by 35,000 a year. . . . Best guess on the annual movement of Chicagoans to suburban areas: about 15,000. Cleveland has had an annual loss of some 3,000 whites, and a gain of some 6,500 Negroes, over the past 15 years or so. The city today is 26 per cent Negro; by 1970 that figure should be over 40 per cent. St. Louis population has remained fairly stable, at around 875,000, since 1940. But during those years, the Negro population has increased from 12 to 30 per cent of the total; by 1970, it should be around 45 per cent."

According to Southern newspaper reports, the same process is taking place in many of the citadels of segregation. In the Georgia bailiwick of Representative Davis, the *Atlanta Journal* reported last summer that white

school enrollment has increased by only 500 since 1955, while Negro enrollment has grown by 8,400. A Chamber of Commerce official quoted by the newspaper said, "Our schools are 40 per cent Negro now and will probably be 50 per cent by 1961." In Charleston, South Carolina, the *Journal and Guide* reported last September that "enrollment of colored pupils for the fall term in Charleston's schools comprises 69 per cent of the total enrollment. . . . During the past five years, colored enrollment in Charleston's public schools has increased from 6,754 to 8,277. In the past year, white pupil enrollment decreased by 369 to 3,774. . . . Officials said that at the elementary school level, colored pupils outnumber whites by more than three to one." In Nashville, the *Tennessean* reported that Negroes now constitute 33.8 per cent of the population, and added: "Moreover, all of Nashville's increase since 1950 has been in the Negro population and there are actually 400 fewer white persons living in the city than there were eight years ago." These figures from segregated as well as integrated areas indicate how little the "flight to the suburbs" of Washington's white families and the arrival in the city of low-income Negroes have to do with public school integration.

The population shift has worked marked changes in the composition of the District's school enrollment. Since residential segregation persists in the capital, there is a tendency for either white or Negro pupils to be in the overwhelming majority in individual schools. This year 20 of the 170 public schools have all-Negro student bodies. Five schools are all-white. In most of the schools, student bodies are composed 70 per cent or more of members of one race. Four schools have 50 to 70 per cent white enrollment and 10 are 50 to 70 per cent Negro.

School Superintendent Hansen believes that "with support from the home, any child can benefit regardless of the race predominant in his school." Commenting on the population shift, Hansen said recently, "A well-managed school system should be able to produce effective results in terms of pupils,

regardless of race. The efficiency of an educational program need not be determined by the factor of race. In our school system, this factor is being constantly minimized."

**T**HE substandard scholastic level of many Negro pupils became evident almost as soon as the schools were desegregated. The first city-wide achievement tests, published in 1955, provided dramatic documentation of the educational handicaps imposed by the inequities of segregated schooling. On the average, former Negro schools fell far short of the scores chalked up in former white schools. With 64,000 Negro pupils and 41,000 white pupils, city-wide results did not come up to national standards. Scores showed that the typical Washington fifth grader was working at the national fourth grade level in arithmetic reasoning and at the third grade level in reading comprehension. Fifth grade pupils in half of the 110 elementary schools were retarded by at least one full school year in comprehension of paragraph meaning, word meaning, spelling, language, and arithmetic computation. The scores came as a surprise because no comparable program of city-wide testing had ever been undertaken before. White and Negro divisions had always used different sets of tests and not all Negro pupils had been tested.

Most of Washington's educational planning in the past four years has been directed toward eliminating the deficiencies revealed by desegregation, raising the achievement levels of retarded pupils and keeping capable students from being held back by their slower schoolmates.

The District has a four-track system of ability grouping in the high schools. It provides a demanding honors program for gifted children, a regular college preparatory program, a general program for students not planning to go to college, and a remedial basic curriculum for slow-learning pupils. School officials have encountered problems in evaluating students for assignment to proper tracks, but they report that the program is generally working well. Similar abil-

ity grouping is being introduced into the junior high schools and is planned for the elementary level. Assistant School Superintendent Gregory, one of the system's top Negro officers, says: "No one who goes into a school and sees a slow group made up 80 or 100 per cent of Negro students should feel any resentment. It would be a disservice to group them otherwise. For some time more children in the upper groups will be white and more in the lower groups will be Negro. It takes a while to overcome the results of segregation and cultural disabilities."

Recognizing the fact that reading disabilities are at the root of most educational problems, the schools have concentrated on reading instruction. Special remedial programs in the past two summers, limited to small classes, have resulted in notable gains. A reading clinic has been established to diagnose pupils' problems and help solve them. A squad of specialists has been assigned to assist teachers in schools where reading difficulties are acute. Teachers with training in reading instruction have been encouraged to set up remedial classes.

The school administration ordered stronger emphasis on basic subjects and general tightening of academic standards. The results were reflected in the failure rate of elementary pupils, which rose from 3.9 per cent in 1953 to 12.8 per cent in 1957. This did not indicate a lower caliber of work but rather the modification of old "automatic promotion" practices. The schools have also been able to increase their services to physically, emotionally, and mentally handicapped children. The number of special classes has multiplied. This year, 12 psychologists have been assigned to visit schools regularly, confer with teachers and principals, and study individual cases.

In the fifth year of integration, there is convincing evidence that these efforts are bearing fruit. Average achievement levels throughout the city have been raised to within a few months of national standards, and progress continues. "Our schools have higher standards now than they had before desegregation," says Assistant Superintendent

John D. Koontz. "Standards went up because of the new focus on education which desegregation brought. Of course we have many children at the lower end of the academic scale—but that doesn't hurt those at the upper end." More than 40 per cent of the District's high school graduates continue their education in four-year colleges, junior colleges, nurses' training schools, or special schools in such subjects as art, music, or business. Washington students are well-represented among the winners of scholarship competitions, and colleges have sent back favorable reports on the alumni of the school system. School Board President Tobriner commented recently, "Integration has not been an unmixed blessing. It brought many problems which it will take a long time to solve. But it can fairly be said that one, and perhaps the most important result, of integration is that more children will receive a better education than was ever possible under the dual system. And this is true without any sacrifice in the quality of education being given to our gifted children."

**I**N THE capital, as in every other major city, educators have found that the schools must take on many of the functions of social welfare agencies. But the school system's growing interest in these areas has led to two unfortunate misconceptions: that the problems are somehow caused by the schools, and that they are somehow a result of school integration.

Referring to one of the District's most acute social welfare problems, Superintendent Hansen deplored "the all too common tendency to associate school attendance with the problems of venereal disease and illegitimate pregnancies." Commenting on a recent report on "junior mothers," the Superintendent added:

"Because the data have to do with children of school age, the report groups them by levels of school attendance. As a result, the conditions by implication are school-connected. A further unjustifiable inference is unavoidable—that somehow all school-age children are suspect, that schools are dangerous

to the morals of youth, that they cause rather than reflect the social evils. . . . The fact is that for far too many children the school is the only really constructive element available to them. When the home is degrading, when community experiences are negative, and when the church fails to attract children with moral deficits, the school is the only place where positive experience in a moral environment is available. Instead of being a place for the spread of social infection, the school serves generally as the means of its curtailment and often, as the record shows, its elimination."

School officials reported recently that there were 209 pregnancies among school-age girls last year, a decrease from 242 in 1956-57. The annual figure represents about four-tenths of one per cent of the girls enrolled in the school system. No inter-racial relationships are involved. Though illegitimacy records are not kept by race, there can be no doubt that the problem is greater in Washington's Negro community. Its causes include poverty and cultural deprivation, crowded housing and lack of parental supervision. Estimates based on United States Census data show that some 45,000 Negro children in the capital and about 1,000 white children belong to families with a submarginal total annual income of less than \$3,000.

Despite some initial reluctance, the District schools have decided to launch a program in "Personal and Family Living," including sex education. Teacher training is under way this year, and a pilot program is being tried in about a dozen schools. Working through such subjects as physical education, science, home economics, and social studies, the schools will try to impart both factual knowledge and moral background to children at all grade levels. Wherever possible, teachers will try to provide individual counseling.

Other health and welfare problems still await solutions. The District Commissioners' Youth Council reported recently that schools receive about 700 requests a month for clothing and more than 600 requests a

month for shoes alone to permit needy children to attend classes. Burdened principals, teachers, and counselors now must find the time and resources to meet these requests. A campaign is currently under way for public contributions to help provide daily lunches for almost 1,000 hungry children attending 11 elementary schools in downtown Washington. Officials report that another 6,000 grade school pupils in other parts of the city are also in need of free lunches which are not now provided by any tax-supported program. These needy children, educators point out, are not only being deprived in a physical sense; their education suffers and their behavior is guided into delinquent patterns. Most of the thefts reported in the schools involve food.

Washington educators hope they will get more community support in dealing with such critical needs as these, but they are convinced that school integration itself was a step in the right direction. Superintendent Hansen has commented, "The total school program and the teacher's relationship to the child must be even more effective as a way of holding the child in school, giving him a sense of self-respect, a taste of success and recognition according to his ability to achieve, and supplying for him persons who care for him no matter how he may be rejected in home and community. For every child there must be a place of honor in the school environment."

**W**HEN Washington schools began desegregating in the fall of 1954, educators and police officials were prepared for friction and possible violence. The opening of schools was uneventful, but a month later the first and only demonstrations against integration took place. In the wake of well-publicized student strikes in Milford, Delaware, and Baltimore, students of three District high schools failed to report for classes. In the next four days, encouraged by some adults, a total of 2,500 junior and senior high school students stayed out of school. By the fifth day they were back. In his pamphlet on school desegregation, "Miracle

of Social Adjustment," Hansen attributes part of the strike to "a good-natured desire to have a holiday." He tells of the white students at one school who invited a Negro classmate to join them in the demonstration. "Who, me?" the youngster asked. "Yes, you," they replied. "You're one of us, aren't you?" At one high school, the principal persuaded students to turn a protest demonstration into a football pep rally.

Nonetheless, individual incidents of racial conflict did increase immediately after desegregation. This was particularly true in changing neighborhoods, where youngsters reflected the anxieties and tensions of their parents. When the Davis Subcommittee investigated the school system in 1956, police officials reported that "incidents in and around schools, of a racial nature," totaled 4 in 1953, 3 in 1954, 12 in 1955, and 15 through May of 1956. Immediately after the Congressional inquiry, the Youth Aid Division of the Metropolitan Police Department set up a card file on all inter-racial incidents reported to Washington's 14 police precincts. Though it includes all incidents involving juveniles—not just those in and around schools—and though it includes many where racial factors are not directly responsible, the file shows these totals: 24 in 1956, 17 in 1957, and 9 in 1958.

Typical of the incidents described in the file is this: "October 17, 1956. 9 P.M. Racial incident, 3900 block Burns Pl. SE. White and colored boys involved in exciting the neighborhood, mostly by name calling and chasing each other. No injuries reported."

At Anacostia High School in Southeast Washington, where racial tensions once ran high, Principal Eugene E. Griffith reports that there have been fewer incidents each year since desegregation, though 1,232 white students and 427 Negroes are enrolled. "We had three fights a month the first year of desegregation," Griffith says, "and less than one a month last year. There is hardly any evidence of racial tension now."

Among the organized juvenile gangs which flourish in some of Washington's run-down neighborhoods, racial conflicts are a

rarity, according to detectives of the Youth Aid Division. "When we ask the kids why they form gangs," a detective reports, "they say: 'To protect ourselves against whites' or 'To protect ourselves against Negroes.' But that's just the excuse they give. They go out and look for fights with kids of their own color. Our biggest problem is white boys fighting white boys and colored boys fighting colored boys." Inside and outside the schools, genuine racial incidents are few.

**I**N THE capital's classrooms, no noticeable friction exists among students or between teachers and students. In most schools, seating is arranged alphabetically. Where it is not, white and Negro students tend to sit with classmates of the same race—as they do in school cafeterias. Where alphabetical seating is enforced, students have found it has its compensations. "We might never have gotten to know each other any other way," a white boy commented.

Negro teachers work in some predominantly white classes and white teachers in some predominantly Negro classes. They have encountered no unusual difficulties. "Some teachers may be prejudiced," said the Negro president of a high school student council, "but they certainly try hard not to show it. Sometimes children who aren't doing well in school think teachers are prejudiced when they really aren't." No racial line is drawn in such extra-curricular activities as clubs and student government, where white students frequently are elected to office by Negroes and vice versa. School athletics present an outstanding picture of inter-racial cooperation.

When desegregation began, many schools suspended such social activities as dances. Assistant Superintendent Gregory says that those schools which have restored social activities "now realize that they had nothing to fear; I've never seen a mixed couple on a dance floor." He explains: "Youngsters dance with their friends, and in Washington white children have white friends and Negro children have Negro friends. Maybe that's good and maybe it's bad—but it's true." In

high schools which have not resumed dances, students are vocal about wanting them, claiming that they are "mature enough." Teachers and principals often do not share their eagerness. Some feel that dances never belonged in the schools in the first place and are grateful that integration provided a pretext for ending them. One knowledgeable Negro high school senior commented: "Of course we'd like to have the dances back. But we've got to consider what the South will think."

Principals report that the initial apathy and even hostility of many parents involved in desegregation transfers has changed to cooperation. White and Negro PTA groups were merged four years ago and have worked together effectively since. Parents, students, and teachers regret the fact that residential patterns have upset the racial balance in many schools. "It's hard on both groups," a high school senior commented. But there is no feeling that an all-Negro school in an integrated system is tantamount to an all-Negro school in a segregated system. The gains since integration are well known. "There are the intangibles, too," Gregory commented. "A tremendously satisfying moral climate surrounds a community that is democratized."

In the fifth year of Washington school desegregation, no significant racial problems exist, but problems of education and welfare still loom large. Confronted with the after-effects of segregation and with thousands of children who come from socially deprived homes, the school system finds itself short of qualified teachers, adequate buildings and needed special educational services. These would be difficulties in any community but in Washington, which is dependent on the largess of the Congress of the United States, they are critical problems. Occasionally, the magnitude of the job ahead seems to dwarf the accomplishments to date. A Washington school official recently described the task in those terms and said the city's schools are far from fulfilling their obligations. "What did Washington do wrong?" she was asked. "It had segregation," she replied.

# THE ISRAELI SCENE

## *Politics, Painting, and Other Matters*

### MEIR MINDLIN

AS IT recedes into the past, the Suez-Sinai war may produce only labored rhetorical echoes in the House of Commons, or lingering heartburn in the State Department, but in Israel it looks more and more like a kind of watershed—at least on the short-term view, which is the one Israel lives by. In the space of the subsequent two and a half years, the churning dust of the previous decade has begun to settle, and the more or less long-range problems appear to have crystallized. Financial crises and tenuous coalitions, the struggle to homogenize ethnically disparate communities, the entrenchment of militant mediocrity in the arts, and the hardening arteries of a self-perpetuating “Establishment” which periodically tries to rejuvenate itself for lack of responsible alternative leadership, seem to be the permanent problems calling for solution—though the longer you live with them the greater the danger of feeling them part of the order of creation rather than remediable blemishes. Thus many factors that long seemed transitional now appear to be abiding aspects of the Israeli scene or situation. The familiar sense of siege is still there, but it has been pushed back a few yards in the individual consciousness, though there are recurrent reminders of the hostility of the environment. The recent Syrian shelling in the north that caused a million pounds’ worth of damage

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#### JERUSALEM

and the incidents that have followed it, if continued, may well provoke sharp retaliation and renewed tension. Nor has the Israeli’s sense of isolation been greatly lessened, but by turning increasingly to internal problems he can more easily ignore it, except when it appears as cultural provincialism—where isolation is imposed by the four solid walls of the local mind. This election year may exaggerate certain aspects of Israeli life, but it also tends to illuminate some others.

At the moment even the elections are overshadowed by the big new immigration wave from East Europe, chiefly Rumania. It would seem that the East European governments, finding their Jews unassimilable into totalitarianism, and also sorely needing the jobs and positions occupied by Jews for the new generation of completely Communist-trained intelligentsia, have decided to solve the double problem by encouraging their emigration. Israel is glad to have them, though this sudden wave, long hoped for but only half expected, presents grave absorption and employment problems. A combination of compulsory and voluntary loans and still heavier taxation—in addition to fund-raising in the Diaspora—is being rapidly implemented. But the difficulties are manifold: for example, students at the Hebrew University medical school wonder if their years invested in intensive study may not be made superfluous by the influx of East European doctors; and young Israeli couples who waited long for a flat at last in sight or available have had to forfeit their place in the queue to new immigrant families.

On the political scene, the thinking and maneuvering in Mapai revolve around the question of the succession. Ben Gurion is hale and hearty, in fact ten years younger now than he was three or four years ago, having been rejuvenated by the ministrations of a physical culturist. It is, nevertheless, entirely conceivable that he may retire

after the next Knesset (to be elected in November) runs its span, or even before. There are three elements involved in the maneuvering for the succession: the Old Guard and its political machine, the Young Guard, and the present members of the Cabinet and their adherents. The "struggle" between the Old and Young Guards has recently attracted considerable attention, but the real state of affairs is not so widely known. Several months ago, at a party conference held at the Kfar Hayarok, a decision was adopted formally dissolving the factions in Mapai, but this was a move without much real significance, as I hope to make clear. The Old Guard, or "Bloc" (from its Hebrew designation, *Goosh*), is really the party machine, the network of party secretariats and organizations controlled by Shraga Netzer, a Tel Aviv municipal employee (he is in charge of garbage collection) and party boss of a familiar type. It was the **organized Bloc** that agreed to dissolve at Ben Gurion's insistence, at the Kfar Hayarok meeting, but this was a purely formal gesture. The network of personal obligations and patronage remains, operable at the lifting of a telephone receiver, and it showed its strength in the recent Mapai elections. Except for a few younger men in governmental positions, the Bloc's candidates won overwhelmingly: to keep the Young Guard out was its objective all along.

This Young Guard consists of a group of about sixty to seventy men in their late thirties or early forties who share a common past of pre- and post-State high-echelon service in the "illegal" immigration, the Haganah, and then the army. Some of their better-known leaders are General Moshe Dayan; Shimon Peres, Director General of the Ministry of Defense; Aharon Remez, former Air Force commander and Solel Boneh executive and now the administrative director of the Weizmann Institute of Science; and Professor Nathan Rotenstreich, who heads the philosophy department of the Hebrew University. This Young Guard has met desultorily over the years as particular problems arose, but it is not organized, has no party machinery, and is united only by personal ties and a common past; indeed, by the terms of the Kfar Hayarok decision it may not organize but only meet for theoretical discussion. Thus as things now stand,

all the cards are held by the Bloc. However, it should be pointed out that many of the young men are very close to Ben Gurion (Dayan, Peres), and that the Bloc has no one who can exercise the charismatic attraction of General Dayan. A figure close to the Bloc—in fact not far from being in charge of it—who has emerged from political obscurity to renewed prominence and power is Pinhas Lavon, the Secretary General of the Histadrut Trade Union Confederation. It was his breaking up of Solel Boneh, the Histadrut contracting and industrial monopoly, into its component parts that brought him into the limelight; no one had thought it could be done. Thirteen Solel Boneh managers resigned when the reorganization was carried out, feeling themselves indispensable and expecting to be coaxed to reconsider, but they have remained out and the shake-up has taken effect.

**A**S FOR the Cabinet members, they are being pushed apart or pulled together in accordance with the exigencies of political survival. Mrs. Golda Meir, Zalman Aranne, and Mordechai Namir, for example, have strong ties with the Bloc, while Levi Eshkol will have to make up his mind, and throw in his lot. Generally speaking, Ben Gurion, who chiefly works and lives on the governmental plane, feels himself irked by the demands (for posts and patronage) of the Bloc, and wants to be free for more urgent matters of state and policy.

He recently brought off a stroke of the greatest political acuteness in his dealings with the National Religious party, which left the coalition on the issue of "who is a Jew" for registration purposes: anyone who claims to be one, and does not belong to another religion, as the three labor parties, Mapai, Mapam, and Ahdut Ha'avoda saw it; or only those who could be considered Jewish under the *halachah*—if the mother is Jewish—as the National Religious party insisted. The issue had arisen in connection with the non-Jewish wives of East European immigrants, or more specifically, their children, whom the parents wished to register as Jews. It was hard not to feel that this issue was an artificial one, like most of the others that had occasioned previous break-ups of the coalition by the National Religious party. Of the fifteen coalition crises over the

past ten years, nine were precipitated by the religious parties; four out of the nine resulted in the coalition's break-up. In these instances both the Religious party and Mapai had shown their readiness to compromise and reconstitute the coalition, the Religious because they had no desire to go on without the patronage they enjoyed in their ministries (Religious Affairs, Posts, Social Welfare, usually) and Mapai because the Religious party, a convenient partner, followed it on foreign policy, had no marked economic views, and concentrated on its own preserve: defense of vested Orthodox interests. In fact much could be said for the NRP being pushed into its various demonstrations by the holier-than-thou intransigence and extremism of Agudat Yisrael and Naturei Karta, who claim a greater zeal in pursuit of Orthodox aims (most recently, the agitation against the "mixed" swimming pool in Jerusalem, and its echo, a "mixed" wading pool for toddlers in the Jerusalem Biblical Zoo). However, though the negotiations were protracted, and pursued earnestly by the NRP, it would seem that its failure to return to the coalition was pretty much the doing of Mapai, and, we understand, of Ben Gurion in particular. The calculation he is assumed to have made is this: that a number of disaffected marginal religious voters voted for the nationalist right-wing Herut party because the NRP was *in* the coalition; now they would switch to the NRP. Ben Gurion, unworried by the slight gains to the NRP, would be happy about the loss to Herut. On the other hand, many NRP voters might well feel a vote for that party in opposition would be wasted, and are likely to vote for Mapai, as best representing their economic and national interests.

**B**EN GURION's shrewdest move was to appoint the non-party Sephardi rabbi of Tel Aviv, Moshe Toledano, to the National Religious sinecure of the Ministry for Religious Affairs. The NRP was caught napping, though it tried to organize opposition to Rabbi Toledano's appointment, the two Chief Rabbis "advising" him not to accept the appointment, and the religious papers trying stronger pressure. Rabbi Toledano, with a mind of his own, refused to surrender and there was indeed something odd (on the merits of the case, without politics) in op-

posing the appointment of a venerable (seventy-eight), learned, and wholly Orthodox rabbi as Minister for Religious Affairs. The three labor parties have been doing all they can to assure Rabbi Toledano's success, to show that the country's religious affairs can be run without politics, and have compromised on several matters of principle (e.g. suppressing the Sabbath bus in a predominantly secular Haifa suburb). Furthermore, Rabbi Toledano claimed that Sephardim were not accorded their proper share of religious representation, and that the National Religious party (Mizrahi) had more or less appropriated Heichal Shlomo, the palatial "Supreme Religious Center" built with contributions from the British magnate Isaac Wolfson, for their own party purposes—a charge hard to deny.

It should also be recalled that a very large percentage of recent immigration is of North African or Middle Eastern provenance, and the appointment of a Sephardi to a ministerial post (the other Sephardi minister is that of Police, Bechor Shitreet, and his Inspector General is the very able Joseph Nahmias), would also be helpful at election time, though in all probability Ben Gurion is both serious and sincere in his repeatedly expressed desire to bring as many Jews of Eastern origin as possible into managerial and administrative positions. The problem is clearly related to the availability of qualified personnel; one result of Mapai's having pushed representatives of the Oriental communities into municipal posts and councils is that they are demanding political patronage in proportion to their numbers—a demand difficult to turn aside with the justifiable excuse that many aiming at administrative posts are not really qualified.

Obviously, the ethnic question is a sensitive one, and the problems it has raised in the educational system have generally been played down or obscured by sociological jargon. Research carried out by the Szold foundation and the Ministry of Education tends to indicate that children of Oriental immigrants (including those born in Israel) have difficulty in keeping up with their counterparts of European origin (they show weakness in abstract thinking, tend to self-centered affective reactions, etc., etc.). This lag is explained by environmental and social factors (Oriental children are not expected

to ask questions at home, etc., etc.). Strenuous efforts are made to avoid a separation out by academic ability so as to avoid ethnic separation—which, though helping to solve the teaching problem, would aggravate the social one. (All this is of course not unfamiliar to Americans.) Efforts to get more children of Oriental origin to attend high school are often met by the opposition of their indigent parents, interested in having them enter the labor market. A great many non-competitive scholarships have been provided by the Ministry of Education—more than can be taken up; one high school teacher told me that almost weekly he is requested to provide a pupil for some scholarship, but his pupils are (for the most part) already loaded with scholarships. In addition, special methods of instruction for these children are being explored. In all fairness, it may be said that the state is handling the entire problem with great tact.

One more political event remains to be recorded, affecting Mapam. Mapam has traditionally stood for a neutralist foreign policy which, like neutralism elsewhere, has tended to involve a coldness toward the West balanced by a decided warmth toward what it calls "the camp of the revolution, progress, etc., etc." Yet in a pinch, as during the Sinai campaign, the Zionist self of the party has predominated, though it always has its extreme left wing. One of the extreme left-wingers, Aharon Cohen, a party Arab expert, has been charged with espionage for a foreign power, whose agents he allegedly met rather secretly in the vicinity of his kibbutz, but only for friendly scholarly discussions, according to him. The story of his arrest was leaked by the *Ahdut Ha'avoda* newspaper. It has done Mapam very little good, the conclusion being that that sort of policy leads to that sort of activity—though Ben Gurion came to the defense of the pioneering past and loyalty of his coalition partners' party. But Israelis are very sensitive to security matters, and if Cohen is convicted, Mapam will have something to live down.

**T**HE vicissitudes of the political "Establishment" have their parallel on the "literary front," where the old guard of critics and writers have been fighting a vigorous action against some rather encouraging phenomena. An outstanding *cause célèbre* has underlined

the profound split between the generations in Israel, with its accompanying crisis in ideology. The occasion was the appearance of S. Yizhar's mammoth novel, *Days of Ziklag*, a two-volume, 1,143-page book dealing with about one week in the life of an Israeli squad in the War of Independence, a work to which Yizhar, the leading Hebrew prose writer of the younger generation (he is forty), devoted some five or six years. The storm broke over the failure to award the Bialik Fiction Prize to Yizhar, who was the obvious choice and the only real candidate, works of this scope and seriousness being rare enough in Hebrew writing. The judges stated they had not awarded the prize because "no work was considered good enough," an ironic claim considering the books that have won the prize in the past. It should be emphasized that one of the three judges, Professor Simon Halkin, head of the University's Hebrew literature department, dissented and declared that he would never again act as judge for a Hebrew literary award.

Now what was the fuss about?—for the papers were full of the subject. Yizhar's novel has its serious faults, but his generation of Hebrew writers has little to show that could compare with it. Its chief defects are weakness of characterization and over-expansion, the book being twice as long as its material allows. Then, too, the story is mainly presented through the stream-of-consciousness technique, which cannot by itself successfully carry such an extended narrative burden. Nevertheless, the book is serious, and even profound, full of true insights about the men of Yizhar's generation. But the novel's foremost claim to distinction remains its style: Yizhar has created a rich, flexible Hebrew prose, full of colloquial vigor but suited to every need, which can and will be exploited by the Hebrew writers who follow him. There is something rather Faulknerian in this style, in the virtuosic variety of prose rhythms, in the long periods, and in the expansion of the moment and its atomization into its minutest components till the last moral nuance is squeezed out.

However, the literary question was not the central one. What disturbed Yizhar's detractors was his portrait of the youth of the war generation. He showed them as they were, warts and all, confused about their

mission, bitter and cynical by turns—in short, as recognizably human in their Israeli context, and not the paragons of stereotyped iconography. (A revealing remark was made by one of the judges, who said that a posthumous collection of the juvenilia of soldiers who fell in the war, called *Scrolls of Fire*, was a far better book. This *Scrolls of Fire* has a certain sentimental and historical—but little literary—interest.)

The position Yizhar's unit is fighting for is believed to have been the Biblical Ziklag (I Samuel 30 and II Samuel 1), but it later turns out that this identification was erroneous, perhaps a hint that Zion reborn is not necessarily the New Jerusalem. Yizhar's effort to free himself from the ideological incubus of the preceding generation, to see things as they are, has moved his detractors, the old guard of the literary world, to charge him with representing and advocating what they call "nihilism." To deny their values apparently means to deny all values; and it would appear that they cannot conceive of the necessity of clearing the ground as well as the air in order to be able to do some solid thinking—and some honest feeling—about present-day Israeli realities. As the educators of Yizhar's generation, they might well be shocked at his portrayal of the youth movement leader:

"Do you remember Katzman? Arie Katzman? Boy, was he a character! How long was he our counsellor? The whole winter, a year ago. Arie Katzman!"—David began excitedly, stopping only to draw at his cigarette—"Boy, how he poked around in our minds! The moment he came to the clubhouse he'd begin. Absolutely everything, every damn thought or feeling, every word or silence. You were a goner. No matter what you said he was at you, pulling your mind apart until there was no more left of it than of the chewed bones in front of a jackal's cave. Things you never dreamt or thought of, things you never gave a damn about, he would take and make the most important thing on earth, and nothing else counted. He'd come and poke around between every boy and girl, sniffing out the vaguest hint of nothing at all. He'd snatch at every harmless smile, every yawn, every word or shout and begin straight off to tell you what it really meant deep down, deep deep down in the subconscious, until we didn't know whether we were coming or going. Boy, could he talk, like a politician! And we'd go pale or blush,

all guilty sinners, father-killers and mother-rapers, all twisted feelings and deprived childhoods, creeping around all day trying to keep out of other people's sight and God's and out of our own too. 'Know yourself,' he'd shout at us and our heads would go reeling. Everything simple became complicated, everything straight, crooked, the crooked interesting, and the interesting beautiful—and everything beautiful wasn't worth a damn—go jump in the lake! Boy, did he make life hell for us! He alone! And we, every damn one of us, smart and dumb, good and bad, went after him like sheep, everyone, the whole damn clubhouse. Morning, noon, and night. Then at night we'd start analyzing, accusing, splitting hairs, committing suicide, in a nutshell—absolutely crazy! Damn it all, in fancy highfalutin' words, in undertones and overtones we'd confess and confess and confess, whole days and nights! Boy, if I could get my hands on that bastard Katzman now! That know-it-all, with his endless spiel, and those curls and that red mouth of his, I'd tar and feather him and carry him around the town, saying: this is what happens to bastards who pry into your mind and poke around in your guts and drive you nuts! May he rot in hell!"\*

**S**IMILARLY accused of "nihilism," and with as little cause or sense, is the poet Yehuda Amichai, whose second volume of verse appeared at about the same time, and has resulted in his being called by some critics "the poet of this generation." This second volume, *Two Hopes Ahead*, reveals him as a major poet and has consolidated the small revolution in Hebrew poetic diction he had carried out in his first: the immersion of Hebrew verse in spoken rhythms and turns of speech, its final release from the dead hand of Biblical rhetoric and wooden prosody. Combining a child's-view naivety with a soldier's bluntness, tenderness with an acute sense of the cost in life and values involved in state-building, he has perfected a poetic instrument capable of catching all the nuances and contradictions of the kaleidoscopic blur of Israeli life. The raisers of the "nihilist" hue and cry have seized on one or two poems they have misread, like the one with the following war-weary refrain (Amichai served in the Haganah, the British army in the Second World War, and then in the Palmach):

\*Translations are by the author, with the one exception indicated.—Ed.

*I've seen that you can live and get along  
And decorate the lion's den, if there's no  
other place.*

*I don't give a damn if I have to die alone,  
But I want to die in my own bed.*

They have ignored the extraordinary variety of mood and verse forms encompassed in this slim volume. There is a moving elegy which ends:

*And we, like flower stems in a vase,  
Are bunched together here in the dark,  
Where it's cramped. And above, over the  
edge,  
There's a sky of open flowers.  
Each has his own flower, but which of us  
knows it,  
Down in the cramped darkness, so close  
together,  
So close to death.*

It is not surprising that this sort of mood or insight should disturb adherents of a professional optimism which could allow for this sort of thing in the benighted *Galut*, but not under the Mediterranean sun! Similarly, the remarkable nine-part *tour de force*, "The Visit of the Queen of Sheba," has been least discussed, probably because of its free erotic element, which is illuminated by daring verbal pyrotechnics. (Israeli prudery is becoming proverbial: the censor made the Keita Fodeba "Ballets Africains" dancers put on brassières, which they hadn't had to do in any other country they toured.\* In fact, such is the pressure of respectability in Israel that a brothel-keeping couple, soon after being brought to trial, committed suicide.) Though he feels very much at home in modern English verse, and knows it well, Amihai's closest affinity is with a French poet he has never read: Guillaume Apollinaire. There is the same juxtaposition of disparate images, joined in an iron poetic logic.

Amihai creates a world of private values, opposed to the slogans and catchwords of collective virtue, stressing the intimacy and privacies of lovers, constantly transposing the public issue to the private context. He uses Biblical myth brilliantly in "Young David" and "King Saul and I," treating contrapuntally the demands of greatness (made by

\*Except in New York City, though not in Boston and other American cities.—Ed.

the state) and the price paid by the ordinary man ("I want to die in my own bed"). He can also use a traditional Jewish image with full ironic effect, contrasting the moral certainty of a superannuated orthodoxy with his own moral ambiguity ("Poem on My Birthday"):

*And my acts contract  
And shrink, interpretations  
Around them grow, as  
The Talmud, suddenly obscure,  
Hides on the page,  
And Rashi and the Tosaphists  
Close in from every side.*

A set of forty-seven quatrains closes the volume (their composition was stimulated by Amihai's reading of the medieval Provençal and Spanish Hebrew poets, who favored the form). A good notion of their quality is given in the following two (translated by Robert Friend):

*Once I ran away, but I don't recall when,  
and from which deity.  
Therefore I swim through my life as Jonah  
in his dark whale through the deep sea.  
I have come to terms with my fish because I  
am in the bowels of the world. And so is he.  
I won't be abandoning him. He won't be  
digesting me.*

\* \* \*

*A young soldier lies in spring, cut off from  
his name.  
His body twitters and blooms; his blood  
makes no claim,  
but bubbles and blabs like a child. The  
story is always the same:  
the lamb in its mother's sorrow over the  
flame.*

Both Yizhar and Amihai are saying that the old values no longer guide or explain anything, that in their complex world they have to see and sing things as they are; as Amihai puts it:

*I must think many stones  
Before I have my own real house,  
I invent whole seasons  
Till true spring comes.  
I write long scrolls  
But have no signature as yet. . . .*

**B**UT the most remarkable and most mature work of art produced in Israel this past year has been created by an older artist, Mordechai Ardon, in his triptych, "The Black Sermon." It is, to my mind, a great painting, remarkable in more ways than one. The subject is the Nazi holocaust, but the twenty-five years between us and it have grown into something more like a century: it is as if a Jewish artist had had the time to absorb all the significance and horror of that holocaust, beyond the initial cry of protest and gesture of revulsion, and had set it in the perspective of time and in the mirror of eternity. Irony and paradox have been joined to savage indignation. And this fusion grows out of the basic artistic problem. For Ardon is an exquisite colorist and a master of form, and the juxtaposition and marriage of these fundamental elements of his art with the central horror of his subject is the matter before him. He himself was in Germany in 1933, teaching at the Itten Academy in Berlin (in the 20's he had studied at the Bauhaus with Klee, Feininger, and Kandinsky); none of his pre-1933 paintings survives, so far as he knows.

The side sections of the triptych are about two yards high and one across, while the central section is two yards high and four yards wide. The first panel is called "The Knight," and is set in Germany in the spring of 1933. The knight in the center is dreaming his premonition of the nightmare, while the peasant (an allusion to Breughel's "Fool's Paradise") in the upper center, is an ironic counterweight. The dominant colors are pink and a cobalt blue, colors of spring, but the black and violet lower right hint at what the spring will bring forth. Among the houses at the bottom, the Jew's window is broken. Ardon has let me see some notes he wrote himself: "In the beginning came the spring, the newspaper, and the order of the day; then the boot sang: *Krumme Juden ziehn dahin, daher*.—'And the crooked Jews will scurry hither and thither.'" (This last is a quote from a Nazi song.) You can discern the boot perpendicular in the right half. Nevertheless, the note of spring predominates; the subtle harmony of tones is ravishing. Ardon's colors have a gemlike quality that may derive from childhood recollections of his father's jeweler's shop in Poland.

The central panel, called "The Shooting

Gallery," has a most extraordinary effect. Ardon has here produced such a perfect spatial equilibrium on his surface that the spectator's eye retains its balance at every point: a most precise ratio obtains between form and color and this particular expanse of space. This technical *tour de force*, this balancing act, has its intrinsic relation to the basic meaning of the picture; for the mode here is irony, as the first panel is lyrical and the third tragic. The irony is apparent in the quotation at the left, and in a Janus-form, of the head of Michelangelo's Adam (Adam of course means *man* in Hebrew) facing the double Adam's head peering from the house at the right: man facing man. At the upper left, the disembodied hands of God and Adam are tangled in cords: does God direct the world, does man?—it is a nightmare without solution. At the center left are three puppet-theater backdrops, and then three ranting mouths, their disembodied mustaches beside them; at the bottom, the top of a Jacob's ladder. As Ardon has written: "At midnight, the ninepins fell into the hole they had dug, as ordered, with their own hands." The background is a night violet, with green and red to give the nightmare quality.

The third panel is called "The Mouse," the only survivor, to be seen at the lower right escaping, and which recalls Apollinaire's lines: ". . . *souris du temps, Vous roncez peu à peu ma vie*." Or even more precisely, Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*: "CLOV: There's a rat in the kitchen! HAMM: A rat! Are there still rats?" The concentration camp symbols are clear here, the Block Number 5 at the upper left center, the number at the middle right, the ghostly inmate with his yellow badge gazing through the cell window, the furnace at the bottom with the disembodied flames, the disembodiment repeated in the candles in the center, and the smoke (like the furnace door, a magnificently painted passage) bursting from the chimney at the upper left. When I mentioned to Ardon the peculiarly acoustic effect produced on me by the picture, he pointed with amusement to the bell tongues swinging at the top, though of course what had struck me was the tonal counterpoint.

As for the over-all meaning, or approach, Ardon put it well in a story (he is a wonderful raconteur, and was an actor once,

he is a short, slight, vivacious man, with features reminiscent of Rembrandt in his later years). He told of how a certain Hebrew actress, when she was a girl back in East Europe, had heard that the husband of her family's charwoman had been killed in an accident. She rushed home to see how the charwoman would take it. Hiding in a cupboard, she observed the woman's brother tell her the news, and the woman, who was scrubbing the floor, turned her head for a moment and said, "What, what?"—and went on compulsively scrubbing the floor. "That's what I was trying to do here," Ardon says, "this is my What, what? There is no answer, and no escape." Something of this interrogation of the void can also be found in Ardon's big triptych ("Traps," "The House of Cards," "The Unborn") in the Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum.

Among other things, Ardon spoke of how he was impressed, on a recent journey to Europe, by the Spaniards and their use of materials (jute, for example)—"sewn coarsely as Jerusalem Jews sew shrouds"—which seemed to him to reflect the monastic tradition, the bareness, roughness, and abnegation of the desert. "In that they are so close to us," he said, and went on to tell the story of Rabbi Sussia, who fainted in prayer before the ark. Asked why he had fainted, Sussia said he had heard a voice asking him why he wasn't like Moses: "But I'm not Moses." Why wasn't he like David, like Solomon?: "Because I'm neither David nor Solomon." Why wasn't he like Sussia?—that was where he fainted. "Between Athens and Jerusalem, I have always belonged to Jerusalem," Ardon says. So Ardon's Jewish *persona* must long for the direct, immediate roughness of bare statement of these Spaniards, but he cannot betray the subtle aesthete in him, the instinct to wrap even death and terror in beauty.

IT is hardly necessary to add that Ardon's symbols are not to be confused with "literary" content: they have their own charged meaning in the purely pictorial context of the canvas. Ardon is concerned with expressing layers of consciousness which call for meaningful symbols, while exploiting all the technical advances of 20th-century painting. He recently returned from a Unesco mission to Europe (where he looked into art teach-

ing methods) and spoke a bit ruefully of how he had found "abstraction in the box seat." "We're still on the wagon—others have fallen off—but abstraction is in the box seat and driving full speed ahead." This apparently affects him, and it is perhaps disturbing for an artist to slowly and painfully work out his own style and perfect it over the years (he is sixty now), to find that a certain element of innovation for its own sake has taken over the reins. He is well aware of the sense of terror communicated by the younger abstractionists, and that it is a true reaction to the world they live in; he himself was greatly refreshed by the Mondrians and Maleviches he saw: "How calm and pure that Mondrian was, as if assuring one that something exists and endures outside of what happened to us."

But he also remembers the crowds that collected around a Bosch drawing in a Dutch museum, "a drawing of trees with two ears at the sides, as if listening to the forest, and the forest floor strewn with eyes. The picture spoke an unknown language, but spoke it clearly, and the emotion conveyed stirred one's depths, aroused a profound response of the imagination." Perhaps there was an oblique hint at why he does not exhibit in Israel in an allusion he made to a Dali—"that conjuror, but a great conjuror!"—he had seen, which also held the spectators' attention. "There was a sort of dish-shaped pond, over it hung a tree, and from the branch a telephone receiver. No one asked what the receiver was saying to the pond, no one asked insistently what it meant; they looked and the meaning came across." Perhaps the down-to-earth Israeli temperament, its common-sense shortness on imagination, inhibits him from exposing the works of his imagination to an unsympathetic gaze—but this is only my guess; in René Char's aphorism, "No bird has the heart to sing in a thicket of questions."

Virgil Thomson's recent call for a re-orientation of modern music seems to me to be relevant to Ardon's work: "*The tradition of constant change* must be thrown overboard and freshness found through other preoccupations. . . . We may well be reduced to seeking innovation through expressivity, instead of expressivity through innovation, and to finding expressivity through sincerity. . . ." This is what Ardon is doing.

AS SHOULD now be evident, in Israel, as elsewhere in the Western world, there is a perceptible gulf between artist and public, but one is always surprised by spontaneous reactions to first-rate works. Perhaps Israel, so preoccupied with material growth and building, has to rely even more than other countries on its artists for the elements it notably lacks in its daily life: mystery, solitude, concentration, perspective, wholeness, vision. It would be misleading to imply that Amihai and Yizhar, for example, do not have their avid and understanding readers.

As for the much-discussed role of Israel as a well-spring for stimulating and inspiring Jews the world over (a role usually more honored in the breach) it is exemplified in the case of the painter Yehoshua Kovarsky. He came to Israel from Lithuania as a youth, studied in Paris for a while, then returned here, where he became known jokingly as the "recluse of Safad," because of his modest and retiring nature. In 1951 he went to the U.S., where he made his reputation, and where a good many of his pictures now hang in museums. But he felt that his roots are fed here, and he has been spending the last year in Israel, with valuable results. I think that he is in the real avant-garde of what is likely to become the post-abstractionist movement. One might call his work, for lack of a ready-minted term, symbolic expressionism. He utilizes all the achievements of the last half-century for his own ends: the creation of a world of striking symbolic

images drawn up from the depths of his imagination. Many of his more powerful works—there is a new series called "Homage to the Gods"—have the intensity and aura of cult objects, achieved through a very bold use of color, a masterly variety of surface texture, and the deliberate choice of mythical subjects, though these subjects seem to be derived from a sort of pre-memory of the race, while their peculiar forms are uniquely Kovarsky's own. Recently turned fifty, his potentialities seem richer than ever after his stay here.

Finally, I should like to point out that I may be wrong in my estimate of Israel's limitations—or, rather, potentialities—as a small country hard-pressed by her own immediate needs. This was brought home to me by an incident I witnessed recently. I was sitting in a café frequented by artists and writers, just opposite the Knesset building. A Burmese, apparently a member of some visiting mission on a long stay (as became evident), came into the café. Before sitting down, he went over to the newspaper rack to take a paper. The waitress offered him a copy of the English-language *Jerusalem Post*. No, he didn't want that paper, and leafing through the collection, he chose one of the Hebrew dailies, and sat down to read it systematically, and obviously with considerable ease. The fact that this Burmese had thought it worth his while to learn Hebrew may be a premonition, if ever so incipient, of Israel's possible function in regard to Asia.

# LIBERAL GOVERNMENT FOR "BACKWARD" STATES

## *Is Only Dictatorship Practical?*

WILLIAM J. NEWMAN

*"Mandamus and certiorari are flowers of paradise, and the whole length and breadth of Pakistan is not wide enough to confine their perfume. If, in England, judges can stretch certiorari even to a rate inspector's assessment, we who are less conservative in interpretation and are often faced with a situation more fraught with political vicissitudes will have to go much farther."*—Z. H. Lari, President of the Karachi Bar Association (*Manchester Guardian*, December 13, 1958).

THE flight of the underdeveloped countries from liberal government has become a rout. Another period of disillusion, perhaps the last, is upon Americans of good will and liberal sympathies. The great hope that liberalism would evolve among the unorganized, ill-educated, and impoverished peoples of the underdeveloped areas can now be seen as one more failure of the well-meaning mind to cope with, or even recognize, the brutal forces at work in those areas. Whose fault was it? That of the United States for not spending enough money, and not insisting on the necessity of liberal government to the backward peoples? (But that would have smacked of imperialism.) Or is it simply that mobs are impossible material for liberal ways? . . . Except in Latin America (perverse as always), dictatorships are rising fast everywhere. Burma, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, the Sudan, are the most notable converts. Other states—like Ceylon—seem on the edge of either dictatorship or chaos. The liberal was not only wrong; he

was one hundred per cent wrong. The expected progress from authoritarian to liberal politics did not take place; instead, most of the underdeveloped states started out with liberal politics (or at least aspirations) and moved to authoritarian politics. It is the end of an era, the beginning of a black night, etc., etc.

That being the case, and the cold war ever with us, it is time to be realistic. We don't like dictatorships. But these are not Communist, they are even anti-Communist. And they promise relief from the inevitable tension of trying to establish a liberal way of doing things. For at least a dictator dictates; he governs. Brutal, yes; but simple efficiency is the result. The problem, therefore, is no longer to make democracy work, but to make dictatorship work.

Such is the new line of reasoning of the fatigued liberal of the West today. The argument serves to still his conscience, while it promises a solution. It is time to subject this mood—which is all that it is so far—to a critical examination. Recent events—whatever their logical implications—have engendered a mood of pessimistic fatalism about the prospects of liberal government outside the narrow confines of the West. David Riesman, once again is an example of how the liberal pulls the rug from under his own feet: "Certain inventions [which] worked out in the West, such as federalism and judicial protection of minority rights . . . seem of scant possibility when ethnic blocs and religious sects, newly armed with slogans and the power to harm, struggle at once to establish an identity and to mark its boundaries. Thus, while we can prefigure the end of traditions, it is hard to envisage the beginning of enlightenment." But moods are not always logical. To say that there are

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dictators because there are mobs may only be to say there are mobs because there are dictators. As Daniel Lerner has shrewdly pointed out in his recent book, *The Passing of Traditional Society*, the underdeveloped countries present the old chicken-or-the-egg conundrum in particularly acute form. It is necessary, therefore, to get off the dead center of such arguments and, putting naivety behind us, look once again at the problem of liberal government in the underdeveloped state.

It is essential, above all, to ask the right questions. The right question is not: is liberalism possible in the underdeveloped states? Obviously it is, since nothing in politics is impossible. Nor is it the right question to ask: what is the probable future of liberalism in these states? The situation is too complex to allow a graph of probabilities: man is a free agent, and no one can say what decisions will be made in these states and by what people or what groups. We are not dealing with atoms or neutrons, but with army officers, politicians, students, bureaucrats, and peasants—elements, I repeat, not readily synthesized into probability curves. Univac won't help here.

The proper questions are rather: does liberalism have any relevance to the situation of the underdeveloped states—that is, does it provide any answers to the problems they face? Secondly, does dictatorship have any special advantage in dealing with these problems which liberal government does not have? Having answered these questions it will be possible to ask the third: what are the alternatives before the underdeveloped states? Dictatorship or Communism? Or, is the real choice between liberalism and Communism?

## II

THESE questions require a preliminary definition: what is meant by liberalism, and liberal government? Here—oddly enough—the American intellectual has been outrageously inept. (Too many Univacs?) It is necessary to keep liberalism clear of democracy on the one hand, and capitalism and

socialism on the other. Liberalism is a system and philosophy of government. It is not an economic system. There is—or, rather, was—a system called *laissez-faire* which tried to identify itself with liberalism. But there is no logical and necessary connection between them, nor any historical connection.

It is possible to discern another confusion, that liberalism and democracy are the same thing. Again, they can coexist side by side; they are not incompatible. But they can and they do exist separately. Democracy is a form of government by universal suffrage, majority rule, and the secret ballot, and a philosophy of government which preaches equalitarianism. None of these is the essence of liberalism.

What, then, is liberalism? It is a form of government which combines majority rule and minority rights—where democracy provides only majority rule, and dictatorship provides neither. Liberal government also establishes free speech (and other freedoms), but above all provides for constitutional checks on governmental power while *at the same time* making government possible. It is the only form of government (for a great society) which provides unity without destroying or trying to destroy diversity, which provides freedom and *government*—strong government. It is the only form of government which does not try to avoid the issue of freedom and government, but instead grasps the dilemma and tries to keep both alive. It is also a philosophy of government which posits the potential rationality of men and their ability to limit their desires so that all will remain free.

In short, it provides order without destroying freedom; and the prime example of this is the American constitution with its delicate—and exasperating—balance of governmental institutions and powers. This type of government (the new realists among American intellectuals will be happy to know) is not incompatible with government by snobs, elites of all kinds and shapes, aristocrats, and charismatic leaders; provided, of course, that the snobs, *et al.*, do not try to take away everybody's freedom—always a

difficult restraint for snobs. Hence the system of checks and balances. (Liberals are nothing if not cynical about men's motives.)

These distinctions have been ignored by the American liberal in his desire to be a hard-headed realist, and therefore it is necessary to make it clear that liberalism is a feasible and not an impossible form of government. Liberalism is limited in what it expects to do for men; it does not try to do all things but merely one: provide a framework of government which combines order and freedom so that change can take place without violence. That has been its historic role; that is its only role.

To carry out this purpose, certain typical liberal institutions have been created. There is no need to do more than mention them. Parliaments, responsible executives, judicial restraint, federalism or decentralization, political parties, constituent and amending powers, constitutions, separation of powers, and something vaguely called the right of revolution (the underdeveloped states should like that) have all created a system of constitutionalism which has led Professor Carl Friedrich to say that "constitutionalism is about the only system of government which seems to be able to get along without . . . agreement on fundamentals." It can get along without such agreement because its institutions are designed to make possible disagreement without the destruction of government.

But, if liberalism is limited in its aims, that still does not make it a possibility for the underdeveloped countries. Is it, for example, impossible to operate a parliament in, say, India or Pakistan? It is time to deal with the first question: what is the relevance of liberalism to the problems of the underdeveloped state?

### III

THE claim is made here that liberalism is relevant to the problems of the underdeveloped state and in fact is the only governmental system so far discovered which can resolve the dilemmas that face those states. The only governmental system, that

is, except for just one other, Communism.

Although generalizations concerning such diverse states as those in the underdeveloped areas are risky, the underdeveloped states have at least some problems in common. One is the question of national unity, the creation of a national state out of a collection, usually a random collection, of cultures and tribes. Ethnic diversity is the norm in these states, a diversity compounded by class differences cutting across and merging with ethnic differences. It was and is such diversity which divides Indonesia, which caused the collapse of government in Pakistan, and is straining the charismatic charm of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana. It is an old problem in nation-building; how can a sense of overriding loyalty—of final loyalty—be directed toward the center rather than the local traditional and familiar group? The answer to that problem must obviously deal with the local loyalties, in one way or another. They can be crushed—but that is expensive, difficult, and dangerous to the very unity desired. Or, a governmental framework can be provided in which the evolution from localism to nationalism may take place at the same time that the local loyalties continue to exist, and government, i.e., order, is maintained. It is this latter solution which liberalism is designed to achieve, and various techniques have been worked out for it: federalism, decentralization, checks and balances, representation and special safeguards for minority groups.

Most of these techniques have been used in the current attempt to create unity in Nigeria, the newest and most significant of the African experiments in nationalism. There, along with a federal state, there will be special safeguards for the minorities that live in the three major regions. The central government will not lack power, and will naturally be the center of attention of the state's leading politicians. But at the same time the regions will keep their peculiar cultures; the Moslem northern region, for example, will not find itself being swamped by the more progressive and aggressive western and eastern regions. David Riesman may despair of federal institutions in underdevel-

oped states, but strangely enough the Nigerians do not.

India, too, has used these liberal techniques of creating unity while maintaining a multitude of states. The Indian government is powerful and can legally override the Indian states almost (but not quite) at will. And it does. But the states not only exist, they flourish with their own rude varieties of politics. To say that the political life of these states is indeed so rude that if it were not for the existence of the center they would have already gone off half-cocked, is but to state the purpose of the center as a balancer. The states can exist, but not to the extent that they destroy the greater union. Such at least is the theory of the Indian constitution, and so far it has proved viable. Will the states some day create chaos with their language and caste, and half a dozen other particularisms? It is possible. But not only has India passed through what is probably the worst period of language controversy, and not only has the state of Kerala shown that the liberal system is effective at containing Communist politicians (who are now complaining that the Congress party is using unconstitutional means against the Communist party—an excellent state of affairs); the central government is stronger than ever, and if it collapses it will not be because of the existence of states but because it will have failed to do its own duty. A delicate but tough balance of power has been achieved in India, and it is not all the doing of Nehru. It is the doing also of a constitution which has given great power to the all-Indian government, but has bound that power so that local areas do not feel they have no say in government and therefore must of necessity revolt.

As a part of that system of balance, the all-Indian parliament deserves some attention. It is a noteworthy accomplishment, if one largely neglected. India, it is often said, has a relatively stable government because it inherited the British civil service; it is this bureaucracy which makes all the difference.

Parliament in India, it follows, is a façade for Nehru and the bureaucracy. In fact, this picture of Indian politics is grossly inaccurate. The Indian parliament is not only busy at work but at work on useful projects. It does not take orders from the bureaucrats, but gives them. It is not so divided as to be incapable of action or so uniform as to be useless for action. It is at the center of the political life and in fact will be of increasing importance, not of less importance, as Nehru fades from the scene. For what other means will there then be to legitimize the doings of the bureaucrats? And parliament, one may be sure, will exact a price for this legitimizing process. A state with a bureaucracy but no parliament is a state without a head. Morris-Jones, in his excellent *Parliament in India*, puts his conclusions thus:

. . . The charge of cabinet dictatorship [in India] is a very familiar one . . . And even if Pandit Nehru's prestige and influence has been outstanding during a crucial period of the development of parliament, it is more likely than not that the institution [of parliament] is strong enough to assume in time its more usual shape.

He also concludes that "the 'experiment' is working and parliamentary institutions are more firmly established in the way of life of the Indian people than they are in that of many a country in Europe." And after all, what are the alternatives to parliament? The Bhoodan movement?

No one can promise the nervous intellectual that the Indian parliament will always be there or even that it can be imitated elsewhere. One can only report that it is there and in good health. But one can also say that it vindicates the liberal method of government, and shows that it can work in a state where the sense of nationhood is terribly tenuous. It is possible to go further and say that liberalism was designed exactly for such situations where unity and national consciousness are weak. The nation-state in fact is a companion of liberal government, and it is shocking but true to say that liberal government is essential to the existence of a nation-state. For only the liberal state pro-

vides the legal equality and freedom and government which is absolutely essential to a nation—that is, a people—establishing their state. A dictator establishes his state over the people, the nation. A free people establishes one for and by themselves.

But the mobs, those awful street mobs, the Angry Young Men of all the backward states—they will wreck it all. And what about these “transitionals” (as Daniel Lerner has termed them), the men-on-the-move, the semi-literates, the quasi-urbanized who are halfway between the peasant and the sophisticated Western-oriented moderns and who ache with the desire to have a place in the sun? Can they possibly fit into a scheme-work of liberal politics? What hope is there of rational politics from this group? Seemingly not much. As Riesman says, it is difficult to love these people. The preliterate peasant, yes. But these unruly and surly new arrivals, no. Yet, if one may say so, Lerner, in his *Passing of Traditional Society*, seems to do just that. Or, to be more precise, he shows that if the “transitional” makes up a mob, that is not necessarily the fault of the “transitional” but of the whole society of which he is a part. And having said that, he immediately gives some hope of taming the mob.

If there ever was a mob, it is that group of transitionals now found in Nasser's Egypt and upon which that dictator-who-would-be-totalitarian depends. But Lerner will not fall for the neat generalization that mobs cause dictators. He has some comments to make concerning dictators who fail to solve the problems of their country precisely in order to keep alive the mob as a way of maintaining their own power.

Nasser has chosen to rule with a military clique, which appeases revolutionary-reactionary fanaticism while moving toward a totalitarian model of mass society. Here upward mobility does not reward excellence in the varied productive roles needed for modernization, but is preempted by those skilled in mobilizing mass enthusiasm for the central power.

The important thing to know about the

transitional person is not simply that he is frustrated, but what it is that frustrates him. A social and economic system that offers no place for his talents (restricted though they may be, he has some) is the problem. Once there was a similar mob in England, and in 1848 (and 1817 and 1819 and 1830) the same chattering of teeth could be heard as now. But the mob in England became the paunchy trade union bureaucrat and the Two Nations became one. No one can doubt that social disorganization has reached a new peak of intensity in the underdeveloped states as a little education and a little social mobility—but not enough of either—has reached the village. But what is the answer? A Nasser who keeps the mob going as the only way for him to keep ruling? Or a Nkrumah or Nehru who aims to open society to the mob in order to ease their desire for modernization and status? If it is the latter, what other political system is available but the one in which freedom does not broaden down from precedent to precedent, but, more important, from class to class? Risky? Very. But an open society at least has a fighting chance to absorb the mob. A closed dictatorship bottles it up until it explodes in everyone's face, including the dictator's.

**T**HE mob was tamed in the 19th century by expanding economic opportunity. What is the prospect for such expansion in the underdeveloped states today? There are no empty spaces for them to fill with their too many people, and no capital to do it with if there were. There are no factories for the peasants to go to and no markets for products if there were. The economic problem, we are told *ad nauseam*, is preeminent. And so it is. It is essentially the problem of forced savings, of acquiring capital out of meager resources, and of planning the proper use of capital. The political results have been best put by G. L. Arnold in his *Pattern of World Conflict*.

Communism runs away with the national-revolutionary movement and advertises its brand of despotic planning to power-hungry intellectu-

als who care little for democracy and much for some means to drag society out of its stagnation.

Arnold also points the moral.

The greatest mistake the West can make is to think of the Communist issue in terms of class, and to pit against a wholly mythical "proletarian" movement the resources of the traditional state and its governing groups, where the real issue lies between libertarian revolutionaries and others who can envisage the transformation of society only in terms of the Soviet experience since 1917.

The problem of economic accumulation is complex, but one important facet of it is the existence of a traditional state in the hands of a governing class that wishes only to protect its privilege, not to create economic opportunity. Dictatorship looks brand new and shiny, but in fact it does no more than the traditional state to create the conditions for economic growth. It does nothing more because it cannot. It cannot because it has neither the expertise, nor—more important—the will. The one thing no dictator can do is create conditions for the equality of individuals; like a traditional chief, the dictator's power rests on the absolute necessity of inequality.

But it is the political equality of individuals which is necessary to break the "cake of custom" and start the process of economic accumulation. No one suggests that a wild individualism should break out in the under-developed states or that they go through the horrors of England's industrial revolution. Nor is it necessary to any degree. What is necessary is that energies be mobilized to make capital—for socialized enterprises—and that can only be achieved by a fusion of individual equalitarianism (and its consequent idea of experimentation) and nationalism. When that happens, what Gunnar Myrdal calls the "spread effects" of economic change can take place. For such effects—the spreading of economic wealth to all and hence the mobilization of the whole population into the wealth-making process—take place only with the breaking down of the barriers to economic growth created by economic, class,

and regional differentiation and by traditional ways of economic action—or inaction. Such a breaking down of barriers can be done most effectively by a liberal government, for liberal government above all else is concerned with freeing the individual and giving him a chance for social movement. Dictatorship is concerned with treating him as the mass and using him as political fodder, and traditional government with keeping him in his village place.

The under-developed countries have to go all the way to full democracy with universal suffrage. The alternative is to remain legalized oligarchies. . . . But as the inherited social stratification in these countries has been shaped by the impact of long periods of economic stagnation and is very uneven and very stale, this will in most cases imply preserving social chasms inimical to the strengthening of those centrifugal spread effects which are necessary for sustained economic development. The inequality which exists there, and is preserved, is not of the type to foster enterprise, savings and investments. . . . Under-developed countries thus need real democracy even at this early stage to break down the existing impediments to economic development. . . .

Thus Myrdal in his *Economic Theory and Under-developed Regions*. However, he also sees the dilemma which the need for democracy poses.

But undoubtedly democracy, at the same time, makes it more difficult for governments to hold down the level of consumption to the degree necessary for rapid development. The tendency towards dynamic dictatorships of a fascist or communist type, visible in most parts of the under-developed world, should be viewed in the perspective of this basic political dilemma.

The fact of this dilemma cannot be ignored. But a dilemma can be grasped, and it is suggested that a liberal government provides the best means for providing both the arena in which democracy can operate and the power to govern which can prevent democracy from leading to economic chaos. It can do this because there is no other form of government which tries to live with the dilemma instead of avoiding it and thus making it worse. And by living with the dilemma it gains time for the society to grow

out of the circumstances which cause poverty. It is a race; one which, of course, can be lost.

Finally, there is the question of leadership. Dare one seriously give the peasant—let alone the mob of transitionals—the vote? How will one then get stable and powerful leadership? (Liberalism, as we have seen, says nothing about the vote, but since universal suffrage is a universal catchword, even in Russia, we can take it for granted.) But liberal government and potent leadership are not incompatible; the West has an enviable record of charismatic leaders. What is important to realize is that the liberal form of government is very much at home with elites and elite leadership. There is no one quite so charismatic as Nehru and Nkrumah. Both operate easily and comfortably within the framework of liberal government (not without some lapses); in so doing their leadership has not been tarnished. Poor Nehru has so much charisma that he cannot resign from power when he wants to. Undoubtedly one can force charisma on the masses, as a dictator does; but one can also have it freely given from the people. And the latter is, oddly, much more likely to be stable and effective. Who is more secure today, Nehru or Nasser?

#### IV

**A** LIBERAL government is not, therefore, necessarily incompatible with the conditions of an underdeveloped state. A problem of combining tribal institutions and town life, as in Ghana or Nigeria, can best be met with a combination of representative government (with an upper house to placate the chiefs and let them down easily as in Ghana) and federalism or decentralization. The old liberal bromide of majority rule and minority rights begins to look good again. The problem of would-be politicians who roam the back streets or sit in coffeehouses can best be met by a free society which just because it is in the process of economic development can provide places for the new elite. A representative body begins to look not quite so old-fashioned after all, for it is

representation and political parties which allow the new elite to push aside the old traditional authorities and to do it without resort to the streets. Once again the breaking up of custom through the dynamics released by individual rights seems to be in order. As one Indian leader put it in his exasperation with sentimentality about village republics:

Village republics have been the ruination of India. What is the village but a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism? I am glad that the Draft Constitution has discarded the village and adopted the individual as its unit.

Is the description which has been given here of the liberal potential of the underdeveloped countries too neat? Does it sound rather too much like a Condorcet scribbling madly away before his death, a liability to which liberals are prone? That is not the intention. Liberalism is no panacea, and not only are all the cards stacked against it but it cannot be applied by fiat. It cannot be because once a historical force is set in motion it is not easy to stop. And the West is now having to pay for all its snob race relations in Africa, and its imperialistic exploitations in Asia. And still the blunders go on. In Aden, an area in which everything is going against the West in the most obvious way possible, the British have just held an election in which only one-third of the qualified voters polled, and the Yemenis in the colony were not allowed to vote at all despite their settled residence there. The establishment of a viable legislative council would have been difficult in any case, but it is clear that one set up and established as a foreign institution for the convenience of the governor has no chance. But one must not blame the British too much; the leaders of the extremists refused to put up candidates at all in this election.

Where neither side understands what liberal institutions are about, there is no reason to think that they will be created. But there are many areas of the world where there is reason to hope that they will be understood, where the possibility of liberal government

is still real. The breakdown in Burma need not be irreparable; it was largely due to a person vendetta between U Nu and U Ba Swe, each heading his own faction. There is no need to assume that the breach in constitutionality will necessarily be permanent. In Africa south of the Sahara and north of the Union of South Africa, there are liberal constitutions in operation and excellent prospects that they will continue. In Kenya and the Federation of the Rhodesias, such prospects will, of course, not be good if the British do not abandon their archaic policy of supporting a few wealthy whites against the Africans. It is still not too late for them to break the vicious circle, and they are the only ones who can do it. But the British government prefers to blunder. When violence breaks out in Kenya again, it should not be said that it symbolizes a necessary rejection of constitutionalism, for the violence will have been created by the British themselves. Is the Sudan with its relatively long history of constitutional parties and government a long-term recruit to dictatorship? It is too early and too easy to say that it is. India and Malaya (and even Singapore) are not yet lost, so why talk as if they were? As for Pakistan and Indonesia, one can grant that they are beginning to enter a long night. Which proves that if a people persist in throwing away one opportunity after another, sooner or later there will be no more.

Liberal government may not spread everywhere, because in fact it has certain built-in defects of its own. It is all very well to talk about a sensitive balance between freedom and order, but it is indeed a sensitive balance and always in danger of destruction, or of tilting too far one way or the other. There is no need, nor is it possible, to draw up rules as to the circumstances under which the balance will fail; it depends on too many factors—one of which is the common sense of the leaders of a state. Liberalism is weak, too, because it is not romantic, it does not give the appearance of great things astir. Its very principle is limitation of power, and it can be agreed that it does not solve the psy-

chological needs of romantic intellectuals in the underdeveloped states or in America. (But are all intellectuals romantic?)

Hence the alternative: dictatorship. Dictatorship is supposed to provide what liberal government cannot provide, namely quick political action, rapid economic development. It is supposed to achieve those aims by suppressing all the things liberalism would tolerate and would attempt to integrate.

## V

NEVERTHELESS, it is difficult to take seriously the claim of dictatorship to do the job of political integration and economic development which the underdeveloped states require. No doubt army officers can govern in the simple sense of keeping down disorder—as if they were the colonial power come to life again. No doubt they can “clean out” corruption—as if corruption were the issue in these countries. And no doubt, too, an occasional genius among them in the most favorable of circumstances can carry the country forward. Such a man was Atatürk. But not only was he a rare bird, he was especially rare insofar as he understood that his role was to carry the Turks *from* dictatorship *to* constitutionalism. The end result of Atatürk's regime was not merely economic development but also a liberal government, for he saw that the two must of necessity go together. But do we have any Atatürks today?

The fundamental failure of a dictatorship in an underdeveloped state lies precisely in the fact that it avoids the issues plaguing that state. It cannot do therefore what a Communist form of government can do, which is to dominate the economy and society to the extent that it can twist them into the image of modernization. A Communist form of government also possesses the ideological drive and certainty which the Communist party can give. As G. L. Arnold has pointed out, the Communists in an underdeveloped state are able to fuse nationalist emotions with totalitarian planning, the type of planning which makes

the term "forced savings" a literal fact. But dictatorship cannot make the same fusion because it lacks the know-how, the ideological sense of aim and method. Dictatorship is simply and only one-man rule, not party rule. And the lack of party rule is the other reason for the failure of dictatorship to make the fusion. It lacks not mass support, but party support, the type of support by an apparatus which is supplied to a Communist regime by the Communist party. The particular combination of elite leadership and cadre following which a Communist party is able to create is completely lacking in most other dictatorships. What methods, let alone ideas, have the recent crop of dictatorships demonstrated, or even promised, to deal with the problems of the divided nations which they have taken over? How are the generals going to deal with the problem of a country fractured into an East and West Pakistan, or a Sudan which is split between northern and southern economies and cultures? What methods have they shown for disciplining the mob or doing away with its existence? But their failure goes even deeper. For in fact, as we have seen, the very existence of dictators in these states depends on disunion and poverty; they would bring forward cures for the problems of their states only at the peril of their power.

For they have neither a party apparatus nor an ideology to give them a base of power. A dictator in an underdeveloped state today is not a Louis XIV or a Tudor monarch who can provide the basic infra-structure for modernization. The only realistic prospect for dictators in these states is one of continual and constant unrest, overthrows by other dictators, foreign adventures, a momentary balance on the peak of a crumbling pyramid.

**T**HESE dictators can best be seen, therefore, as a temporary pause in the story of an underdeveloped country. Their power rests on fatigue and confusion. U Nu and U Ba Swe in Burma become tired of working with each other. Therefore General Ne Win

takes over.\* A brilliant solution! General Ayub, it is claimed, was reluctant to take power in Pakistan. A wise man.† The fact is that these dictatorships are stop-gap governments which lack all the requirements for dealing with the situations their states face. Most of them do not even possess that wonderful thing called charisma—Nehru in India, Nkrumah in Ghana, and Zik and Awolowo in Nigeria can beat them there hands down.

The obvious fact that government in these states is threatened with collapse may be granted. But what may not be granted is the claim that these dictators can do anything but keep the states going from day to day. A not inconsiderable feat, perhaps, but hardly one which will do more than put off a really serious explosion and which, by merely postponing that day of explosion, will make it worse.

Although it may be postponed, the day of decision will arrive. It will be a decision between a liberal form of government and a Communist form of government. Liberal government may not have all the answers to the problem of the underdeveloped states; it may not even have enough. But it has some, a good many in fact, which no other form of government possesses. It may not work—that depends on many things besides liberalism—but it has an infinitely better chance of working than dictatorship.

One of the factors on which the future of liberal government depends is money.

\*See Frank N. Trager's interesting analysis of "Political Divorce in Burma" (*Foreign Affairs*, January 1959) in which he says that "the cause of the political split was not doctrinal or ideological. Rather the break occurred as the climax of prolonged irritation and suspicion among the leaders of the A.F.P.F.L." However, it should be pointed out that many splits within political parties in the underdeveloped states are often a prelude to the formation of a group of new parties, especially where, as in Burma, one party has been predominant. A constitutional system seldom springs into being all at once, complete in every detail.

†Charles Marshall also writing in *Foreign Affairs* (January, 1959) says that "General Ayub has been described as having a clean blackboard but with no idea of what formula to write on it." ("Reflections on a Revolution in Pakistan.")

Money is not the root of all evil, and it can cure a good many evils. It can also provide an essential prop for a liberal government; the need for money in India, for example, is not a need to save a desperate situation, but simply a need to give liberal government a chance. Liberal government in the underdeveloped states is not a hopeless last-ditch affair. It is, on the contrary, a hard-headed, feasible program of action. But it cannot work in a vacuum. The existence and the practical possibility of liberal government make it all the more imperative to spend money on the underdeveloped states, for to allow that possibility to disappear by default would indeed be the great American crime. It is a crime which we are now in the process of committing. And we are committing it, in part, because we are fooled by the claims of dictators, and misled by a facile pessimism, into believing that liberal government has no chance.

There is obviously no dialectic of history which will force liberal government on the underdeveloped states; Western man has no such consolations. Dictatorship being an easy though expensive way to avoid the problems of these societies, it will continue to be popular among would-be dictators. But this much can be said: insofar as liberal government is avoided, the fundamental political problems of the underdeveloped countries will be avoided, and unrest and instability will negate efforts at economic development. Further, the resort to dictatorship will prime the underdeveloped states for Communism, which, after all, is a more efficient way of dictating than dictatorship.

The option for liberal government is not entirely in American hands. But no one should mistake what the real choice is. It is not the one between dictatorship and Communism, but between liberalism and Communism.

## TWO POEMS

### DELMORE SCHWARTZ

#### ABRAHAM

(To J. M. Kaplan)

I WAS a mere boy in a stone-cutter's shop  
 When, early one evening, my raised  
 hand  
 Was halted and the soundless voice said:  
 "Depart from your father and your country  
 And the things to which you are accustomed,  
 Go now into a country unknown and strange,  
 I will make of your children a great nation,  
 Your generations will haunt every  
 generation of all the nations,  
 They will be like the stars at midnight,  
 like the sand of the sea."  
 Then I looked up at the infinite sky,  
 Star-pointing and silent, and it was then,  
 on that evening, that I  
 Became a man: that evening was my  
 manhood's birthday.

I went then to Egypt, the greatest of nations.  
 There I encountered the Pharaoh who built  
 the tombs,  
 Great public buildings, many theaters, and  
 seashore villas:  
 And my wife's beauty was such that, fearing  
 his power and lust,  
 I called her my sister, a girl neither for  
 him nor for me.  
 And soon was fugitive, homeless and almost  
 helpless again.  
 Living alone with my sister, becoming very  
 rich  
 In all but children, in herds, in possessions,  
 the herds continually and newly  
 Increased my possessions through sublime  
 prodigies of progeny, and  
 From time to time, in the afternoon's reverie  
 In the late sunlight or the cool of the  
 evening

I called to mind the protracted vanity of the  
 promise  
 Which had called me forth from my father's  
 house unwillingly  
 Into the last strangeness of Egypt and the  
 childless desert.  
 Then Sarah gave me her handmaid, a young  
 girl  
 That I might at least at last have children  
 by another.  
 And later, when a great deal else had  
 occurred,  
 I put away Hagar, with almost unbearable  
 remorse  
 Because the child was the cause of so much  
 rivalry and jealousy.

At last when all this had passed or when  
 The promise seemed the puzzle parts of an  
 old dream,  
 When we were worn out and patient in all  
 things  
 The stranger came, suave and elegant,  
 A messenger who renewed the promise,  
 making Sarah  
 Burst out laughing hysterically!

But the boy was born and grew and I saw  
 What I had known, I knew what I had seen,  
 for he  
 Possessed his mother's beauty and his  
 father's humility,  
 And was not marked and marred by her sour  
 irony and my endless anxiety.

Then the angel returned, asking that I  
 surrender  
 My son as a lamb to show that humility  
 Still lived in me, and was not altered by  
 old age and prosperity.

I said nothing, shocked and passive. Then  
 I said, but to myself alone:  
 "This was to be expected. These promises  
 Are never unequivocal or unambiguous, in  
 this

As in all things which are desired the most:  
 I have had great riches and great beauty.  
 I cannot expect the perfection of every wish  
 And if I deny the command, who knows  
 what will happen?"

But his life was forgiven and given back  
 to me:  
 His children and their children are an  
 endless nation:  
 Dispersed on every coast. And I am not  
 gratified  
 Nor astonished. It has never been otherwise:  
 Exiled, wandering, dumbfounded by riches,  
 Estranged among strangers, dismayed by the  
 infinite sky,  
 An alien to myself until at last the caste  
 of the last alienation,  
 The angel of death comes to make the  
 alienated and indestructible one a  
 part of his famous and democratic society.

### SARAH

THE angel said to me: "Why are you  
 laughing?"  
 "Laughing! Not me! Who was laughing? I  
 did not laugh. It was  
 A cough. I was coughing. Only hyenas  
 laugh.  
 It was the cold I caught nine minutes after  
 Abraham married me: when I saw  
 How I was slender and beautiful, more and  
 more,  
 Slender and beautiful.

I was also  
 Clearing my throat; something inside of me  
 Is continually telling me something  
 I do not wish to hear: A joke: a big joke:  
 But the joke is always just on me.  
 He said: you will have more children than  
 the sky's stars  
 And the seashore's sands, if you just wait  
 patiently.  
 Wait: patiently: ninety years? You see:  
 The joke's on me!"

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DELMORE SCHWARTZ's new volume *Summer Knowledge, New and Selected Poems 1938-58* will be published in August by Doubleday; the group of poems in COMMENTARY of May 1958, and the present two, are included. The poem "Sarah" was suggested to Mr. Schwartz by Edmund Wilson's essay "On First Reading Genesis" (*New Yorker*, May 15, 1954). Mr. Schwartz is now at work on his first full-length novel, tentatively titled *The Hartford Innocents*.

# THE FOUR HOLY COMMUNITIES

## *The Jewries of Medieval Provence*

ALLAN TEMKO

*These . . . cities shall be a refuge, both  
for the children of Israel, and for the  
stranger. . . .* —Numbers 35:15

LIKE Canaan, Provence is eloquent with sunlight. The landscape, harsh, dry, and brilliant, with white vestiges of antique civilizations, recalls Biblical Palestine: olive trees spring from the rocky hill-sides, and the vines, like those in the Old Testament, are heavy with grapes. Irrigation canals, branching from the Rhone and its tributaries, filter through fields and orchards which yield melons, asparagus, apricots, and berries that are the *primeurs* of France. Yet much of Provence remains desert, a land swept by sun and wind, and alive with color.

Governing the region with the authority of Sinai, six thousand feet above the plain, is the bluish peak of Mount Ventoux—the “Mountain of All Winds,” including the wicked mistral. But the mistral rarely blows in summer, when the hot countryside undulates as in a Van Gogh; and then the mountain looks down on the cities of the plain with the same austere kindness as when, from the 14th to the 18th centuries, this corner of southern France provided refuge for the children of Israel.

Until the French Revolution, northern Provence was the Papal State of the Comtat Venaissin, stretching eastward from the Rhone to the first ridge of the Alps. Its boundaries, marked by great gilded cruci-

THIS is the fourth in a series of essays on medieval French Jewry which ALLAN TEMKO has contributed to COMMENTARY; previous ones were: “The King, the Bishop, and the Jew” (February 1953); “The Burning of the Talmud in Paris” (May 1954); and “The Dark Age of Medieval Jewry” (September 1955). Mr. Temko, who is also the author of the book *Notre-Dame of Paris* (1955), is now teaching English at the University of California in Berkeley. Our August 1958 issue carried his piece on “Temple Emanuel of San Francisco.”

fixes, were opened by the Holy See to the harassed; and the Jew, exiled from England in 1290, from the crown territories of France in 1394, from Spain in 1492, and Portugal in 1497, found that he could live here on terms which, for the times, were relatively humane. In the ghettos of Avignon, Carpentras, L’Isle-sur-Sorgue, and Cavaillon were established four tiny republics—the *Arba Kehilloth*, or four Holy Communities. In spite of intermittent persecutions and vigorous—sometimes violent—proselytism by the surrounding Christian population, these communities clung to their religious and cultural heritage during four hundred years of isolation from the rest of world Jewry. On occasion, when they received permission, they also constructed synagogues; and the temples of Carpentras and Cavaillon, which are all that remain of their creations, stand as the most handsome examples of monumental Jewish art in France.

Jewish history in Provence, however, goes back further even than the medieval foundations of these 18th-century synagogues. Some Jews, drawn from the community at Rome which by Cicero’s time was already wealthy and influential, were present in southern Gaul, it would seem, from the early days of the Roman occupation which began in 125 B.C.E. They probably did their share, as commissary agents to the legions, merchants, and slave dealers, in making the colony the opulent *Provincia* described by Strabo. Nevertheless, Jews cannot have come to Gaul in great numbers until after the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 of our era and after the failure of Bar Kochba’s uprising in 135 C.E.

The Roman impression upon Provence has never completely faded. Descending the Rhone, as the first cypress and ilex appear along shore, the traveler feels that he is on the threshold of Italy. Almost every Provençal city has imposing Roman remains; even the market towns of Carpentras and

Cavaillon have their Roman arches. Under Imperial rule—especially after Caracalla in 212 conferred citizenship on all freeborn males—Jews lived in relative calm and, very likely, affluence in the rich southern province. Their ships plied between the Rhone delta and the mouth of the Tiber, carrying corn, wheat, oil, and wine to Ostia and Rome, and returning to Marseilles and Arles with textiles, spices, papyrus, and gold. Jews were free to practice law and medicine, to serve in the administrative bureaucracy, and to hold military command. They also enjoyed liberty of residence; yet even in classical times they ordinarily congregated in a single quarter surrounding the synagogue, thus creating a proto-ghetto environment which would not be officially forced upon them until more than a thousand years later. Jewish freedom of worship, which included the security of synagogues from hostile pagan or Christian mobs, was guaranteed by law.

THESE synagogues evidently compared in decorative splendor and design, if not always in size, with other religious monuments of the period. Unfortunately, however, Jewish archaeological remains from late antiquity are extremely rare. Only the astonishing 3rd-century structure at Dura Europas,\* on the Euphrates, its walls covered with representational murals, has been found more or less intact; and its simple rectangular plan differs considerably from the more complex basilican plan which was probably employed in Gaul. For ground plans at Elche in Spain, at Aegina in Greece, and at Beth Alpha, Jerash, El Hammeh, and other places in Palestine, reveal that the later classical synagogue in the West usually resembled a Hellenistic basilica. Two lines of pillars, running parallel to the long side of the building, divided the interior into a central nave and flanking aisles. Often the pillars supported upper galleries which, in accordance with Zechariah 12:12-14, were reserved for women. The greatest synagogues had not two, but four rows of pillars which formed a double aisle on either side of an immense nave. Such a structure was the famous monument at Alexandria which, the

Talmud boasts, could contain more people than Moses led out of Egypt.

To visualize these classical synagogues, it is necessary today to piece together fragments of walls, portals, and colonnades. But ruins such as those at K'far Birim and Capernaum (Tell Hum) in Palestine, mosaics such as the fragment from Hamman-Lif in Africa which is now at the Brooklyn Museum, and of course the magnificent Dura murals, indicate that the buildings were fastidiously decorated, both within and without. The Jew was not afraid to display his art on the exterior of his buildings, and their Doric or Corinthian façades, sometimes surmounted by entablatures and pediments, were generously conceived and executed. Significantly, too, in later times pagan motifs mingled esoterically with traditionally Jewish decorative themes.

The ancient synagogues of Provence have vanished, but near Saint-Rémy is the excavated city of Glanum, destroyed in the 3rd century C.E. by one of the first barbarian raids that marked the downfall of the Western Empire. Among the ruins are those of a basilica approximately 120 feet long and 40 feet wide, terminating in a semi-circular apse, and preceded by a forecourt which contained a ritualistic well. Almost surely this was a pagan temple, although it could also have been an assembly hall or law court, but a synagogue would not have been much different in basic plan. Nor can the Hellenistic houses of Glanum, whoever occupied them, have been distinguishable from the homes of Jews throughout the classical world. Perhaps more than the colossal arena at nearby Arles, these houses, with their delightful interior courtyards, show what was lost when wave after wave of barbarians swept over Gaul, bringing to an end, together with all human security, the security of the Jew.

Cities which escaped destruction dwindled in size and population. Their open Roman patterns gave way to twisted networks of medieval streets. The reduced perimeters were walled, and men learned to live in fear, locking themselves within fortified strongholds whenever danger threatened. Avignon, never as important during Roman days as the neighboring river ports of Arles and Orange, became a city of consequence because of the strategic value of its lofty

\*For a discussion of recent literature concerning the Dura synagogue, see the review by Moses Hadas, "Pagan and Jew in the Ancient World," in COMMENTARY of July 1957.

rock dominating the Rhone. The superb Roman public works, such as the aqueduct of the Pont du Gard, fell into disuse. The roads deteriorated. Pagan and Jewish temples, too, were converted to churches, for the barbarian invaders, together with the old Gallo-Roman population, were now Christian.

The Jew, rather than a citizen with full rights, became a stranger without clear legal status. Henceforth, until modern times, his fortunes would vary according to the caprice and piety of local overlords. The lords themselves at first changed frequently as Burgundians, Goths, and Franks, and, from the 8th century onward, Saracens, contended for Provence. Too often—Isidore Loeb pointed out—legends have been accepted which allege that during this violent period Jews participated in anti-clerical revolts (they are said, for example, to have joined a popular rebellion against Bishop Stephen of Avignon in the year 390) or else that they opened the gates of Provençal cities to Moslems or heretical Goths. Much as they may have preferred Saracens or heretics to the devoutly orthodox Franks, the Jews would have been hard put to it to accomplish the treachery attributed to them by Church historians of the later Middle Ages.

**T**HE long era of barbarian and Moslem incursions, which did not subside until the 11th century, has been called the Dark Ages. Yet in some ways it was a progressive period: the West was gradually creating the society which would one day erect the Gothic cathedrals; and in spite of a growing number of pariah laws, including some which restricted synagogue construction, the Jew has known blacker moments. At worst, anti-Semitic legislation, in Provence and elsewhere, was only haphazardly enforced; at best it was openly disregarded by Christian and Jew alike. During stable intervals such as the reign of Charlemagne, a catch-as-catch-can economy offered rich opportunities to entrepreneurs of intelligence and daring, qualities which many Jews apparently possessed. Until the Saracens closed the Mediterranean to commerce, Jewish ships, commanded by Jewish captains, dominated the international luxury trade between Gaul and Asia Minor; Marseilles, one of the busiest ports, received from Bishop Gregory of Tours

in the 6th century the epithet *Hebraea*. By the 9th century, to believe the outcries against them by the zealous Agobard, Bishop of Lyons, the Jews, made prideful by wealth, high political position under the Carolingians, and their own stiff-necked religious convictions, openly proselytized among a population which had scarcely emerged from paganism, especially in rural areas.

The Jews not only survived the Dark Ages, they emerged from the period of invasions as a prosperous and—until the massacres that coincided with the Crusades—tolerated minority. As much as to commerce and finance, they were given to crafts such as weaving, engraving, and armory (Chaucer would write of “a fyn hauberk . . . all y-wrought of Jewes werk”). By the 12th century, there were more Jews than ever before within the territory of modern France: perhaps 100,000, or nearly one-tenth of the population. More than half of them were concentrated in the south where, in places, they constituted imposing minorities of one-fourth or even one-third of the population, with wealth and influence far exceeding their numbers. As often as not, they were assigned the contemptible title of serf, but in reality they were tributary vassals of the great lords and, in this capacity, their “men.” Jews could not change their residence or transfer their allegiance, but they bore no resemblance to agricultural workers bound to the soil.

These southern Jews resided in the same cities as in antiquity, often, it is thought, in quarters they had by now occupied for a millennium. In the complex feudal mosaic of the Mediterranean coastlands, many of them lived under either the direct or indirect rule of the Counts of Toulouse. These enlightened princes governed a vast system of fiefs, extending the width of Provence and Languedoc, which even in the first half of the 12th century were so penetrated by heterodox beliefs that Saint Bernard of Clairvaux came there to preach angrily in the name of the Church Militant. With the exception of Spain, nowhere else in medieval Europe did Jews possess such ease in social intercourse and as much prominence in commerce, finance, and politics—in spite of periodic humiliations such as the ceremonial cuffing of a Jewish elder by the gauntleted Count on Good Friday.

When Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela made his celebrated journey in the second half of the 12th century, he found sizable Jewish communities flourishing throughout the Midi. At Beaucaire, a few miles below Avignon on the opposite side of the Rhone, where great annual fairs were held, there were four hundred families; at Marseilles three hundred families; and two hundred at Arles. Since families resembled small clans, and included married children and grandchildren as well as Jewish retainers, these figures should be multiplied by at least five to arrive at conservative totals for the population of the communities.

Rabbi Benjamin did not mention Avignon, but this should not be taken as proof that the community there was necessarily small and undistinguished. Other sources reveal that the city had its share of noted Jewish doctors. In 1122, to cite a happy example, King Louis VI summoned to Paris an Avignonnais physician named Zour,\* who was also an astrologer and clairvoyant. Zour detected the hiding place of jewels which had been stolen from the royal treasure, and restored them to the delighted monarch.

THE Avignon which Zour knew, rather than the notorious, half-Italian later city of the Popes, was a thriving mercantile town of some fifteen thousand inhabitants. Its splendid situation near the confluence of the Rhone and the Durance, where it served—as it still does—as the hub of the major roads of the region, made it a center of both river and overland trade. This resulted not only in prosperity but in a rare degree of municipal independence. In 1129 the bourgeoisie obtained from the Count and the Bishop the concession of an oligarchic republican constitution, on the order of Venice's, which made Avignon a free city.

\*A transliteration of the Hebrew word for "rock," which indicates that he was called de Rocha in Provençal or, in French, de la Roche, and that his family had originated in the ancient Jewry of Roquemaure ("Moorish Rock") on the Rhone ten miles above Avignon. Members of the family later emigrated to the Netherlands, where there were two physicians named Rocamora at Amsterdam in the 17th century. It was quite usual for medieval Jews to take the names of their dwelling places. Two eminent descendants of the communities at Milhaud and Monteux, villages near Carpentras, are the composer Darius Milhaud and the conductor Pierre Monteux.

Little remains of this Avignon. Not even the Romanesque portions of Notre-Dame-des-Doms (dating from 1140 to 1160) were standing at the time of Zour's visit to Paris in 1122; a now vanished 11th-century cathedral was there. The Palace of the Popes was not dreamed of—its construction would not begin for nearly two hundred years. But between the Rhone and the great square which now lies before the Palace, is a quarter which Zour would not have found much different in his day. Its medieval houses, some of whose substructures are Roman, are pressed together on twisting lanes and alleys which occasionally become stairways on their steep descent to the river.

Here stood the Old Jewry, possibly since Roman times. The irregular area measures no more than sixty by thirty yards, less than a modern city block. The narrow street which runs half its length is still known as the Rue de Vieille-Juiverie. Intersecting this Street of the Old Jewry are two even narrower passages; and at the corner of one of them, the Rue Reille-Juiverie, stands a building whose nondescript exterior scarcely distinguishes it from its neighbors but whose interior is quite another matter.

This oblong room, only ten by fourteen feet, and vaulted by a pair of round arches, is said by an old tradition to have been the early medieval synagogue of Avignon. In the absence of a modern archaeological investigation, it is at present impossible to confirm the tradition, much less to date the construction accurately. The arches seem Romanesque, as does the round window of the southern wall. In northern France this would be enough to assign the building to the 12th century, or to the late 11th. But Romanesque forms lingered late in Provence, where round arches can be found dating, not from the 12th, but from the 13th and 14th centuries.

There is some reason to believe, however, that this is a 12th-century structure, and that it did serve a specifically Jewish purpose. The remaining traces of the eastern and northern windows show they were slightly pointed—that is, Gothic—in style, and this in turn indicates a reconstruction in the 13th century: thus the rest of the building may be presumed to be of an earlier date. Historical evidence supports this conjecture. The Jewry was damaged during the

siege of Avignon in 1226: the walls may have been hit at that time and rebuilt. As will be seen, after the siege the Jews were moved from the Old Jewry, where they apparently had lived by choice, to a New Jewry which was a true ghetto. The old Synagogue and its dependencies were probably given over to the Church, as was usual in such cases. The building would then have been converted into a chapel, and presuming it escaped damage during the siege, the new cult must surely have wished to make some structural alterations. The presence of Gothic windows, in fact, when rectangular ones would have been cheaper, indicates that this was no ordinary dwelling.

Still another piece of evidence suggests that the building once had Jewish liturgical associations. At one corner a well descends fifty feet; the requirement of a ready supply of pure water for ritualistic ablutions made a well a necessity for the medieval synagogue, as it had been for the ancient Temple.

Yet unless the Avignon community was exceedingly small, this chamber, with room for no more than twenty-five worshipers, could not have sufficed as its synagogue. In all probability this was not the temple itself but an adjacent dependency, a study hall or *beth ha-midrash*—perhaps even a hostel for travelers. Or it could have been an auxiliary worshipping place for women, as at Worms, adjoining a more imposing men's temple. Possible future excavations might clear up the mystery.

**T**HIS venerable quarter, in which no Jews now live, has become a melancholy slum; it is hard to realize that eight hundred years ago its sleepy streets brimmed with the kind of economic and intellectual vitality which produced, in 1177, the great Bridge of Avignon. No civic improvement on this scale had been attempted in Provence since the Pont du Gard. The powerful Rhone, even today, is a formidable river to bridge, and to span it with stone arches rather than with reinforced concrete or steel was a prodigious feat which the Romans themselves, content with a bridge of boats downstream at Arles, never attempted. As much as any cathedral, the Pont d'Avignon, much changed and half-ruined as it stands, displays the imaginative vigor of the Middle Ages at its best.

Until the Pont Saint-Bénézet, as the bridge has always been known, was built, the river could be crossed at this point only by ferry, and in the popular legend that turned its construction into a supernatural event, a Jew figures as a ferryman. The legend has it that Saint Bénézet—"Little Benedict"—was a shepherd lad who, tending his lambs, heard a voice from Heaven; the Lord was instructing him to go to Avignon and build a bridge there. Bénézet arrived across the river from the city with three farthings in his pocket, and asked a ferryman to take him over "for the love of God and Our Lady Holy Mary." The ferryman, a Jew, replied: "You must pay me three pence as all do." Bénézet appealed to him once more in the name of God and the Virgin. The Jew only answered: "What care I for your Mary, who has no power in Heaven or on earth? I would rather have three pence, there are many Maries." Then Bénézet offered him what money he had, and the Jew took it, and ferried him across. Once arrived in Avignon, Bénézet is said, by the legend, to have accomplished even greater marvels. To convince the skeptical Bishop of his divine mission, he lifted a stone "that thirty men could not have moved . . . as if it were a pebble, and carried it away and laid it down as the foundation stone for the bridge."\* This supposedly took place in 1177. It required eleven years for the bridge to be completed. The difference the bridge made in the commercial life of Avignon may be appreciated today by anyone who crosses the Rhone by boat. It still costs only a penny or two to take the little ferry to the recreation ground on the Ile de la Barthelasse. The boat is strung on a cable, and after the ferryman poles it into the stream, the strong current carries it along swiftly. Medieval boatsmen had no guiding cable, and without it a boat is difficult—in heavy weather, impossible—to control.

Now the already flourishing town of Avignon attained a new prosperity. Southern France by the turn of the 13th

\*The true facts are more fascinating than the legend. Bénézet, hardly a shepherd boy, was the medieval equivalent of a modern engineer, the head of an order of bridge-building friars who left impressive examples of their skill and diligence throughout southern France; their outstanding monument remained the bridge at Avignon.

century had fully revived economically. Not even under the Romans, perhaps, had times been so good—the standard of living so high—for the bulk of the population. Ironically, this wealth meant the doom of an independent southern civilization in France. The Albigensian Crusade, waged ostensibly to eradicate heresy, had as its main results the downfall of the brilliant House of Toulouse and the acquisition of the territory by the French Crown and the Holy See. In 1226 a French army, led by Louis VIII, appeared before Avignon, which had been under the ban of the Church for ten years. In the siege that followed, disease and famine compelled the city to capitulate after three months of furious resistance. Heavy indemnities were exacted by the victors. Three hundred houses were razed, probably many Jewish houses among them, together with the city walls which were later rebuilt by the Popes and still give a strong impression of the fortified medieval town. Northern princes—Alphonse of Poitiers and Charles of Anjou, both sons of Louis VIII—became the chief lords of Languedoc and Provence. The old Midi life was forever gone. If defeat was painful for the heretics, it was disastrous for the Jews. Henceforth they were banished from public life: a clause of the peace treaty of 1229 specifically barred them from administrative posts. Those few Jews—there were never more than a few during the Middle Ages—who had amassed large fortunes as bankers were crowded from the field by favored Christian rivals; especially, they could not compete with the powerful Florentines who had extended their operations to France. Within a century most Jewish financiers found themselves reduced to pawnbroking, although several managed to continue large-scale dealings.

At the instigation of Christian competitors, Jewish merchants were now confined to second-hand transactions in cloth, apparel, and other goods. Some were still able to trade, as they had for centuries, in spices, grains, wine, oil, honey, wax, alum, leather, horses and other animals, silks, coral, pearls, and gems. These were spirited businessmen—we know one edict forbade them to accost passers-by and pull them by force into the shops. But only extraordinary energy could cope with the oppressive legislation and

arbitrary taxation that had cut heavily into profits.

Jewish artisans were even less fortunate. The guilds, which had long excluded them, achieved a virtual Christian monopoly in most crafts. Jewish seal-makers, illuminators, and jewelers long retained their skills, but Jewish gold and silversmiths, once so famous, grew rare. Franz Landsberger has pointed out that it was in the south of France, so far as can be learned, that for the first time a non-Jew, Robin Asard of Avignon, in 1439 made a Torah crown for the congregation of Arles.

It was at this time, too, that the Jewish peddler, rather than the princely traveling merchant, made his appearance on the roads. In the cities a Jewish proletariat rose, chronically unemployed and dependent on alms. The French saying “as poor as a Jew in Avignon” came into usage.

**T**O ECONOMIC hardship were added social indignities. Badges of infamy—the little red or saffron yellow wheel, sewn on the coat—were imposed throughout the West after Church policy hardened in the anti-Semitic measures of the Lateran Council of 1215. The Council also founded the Inquisition, and laid the way for the establishment of ghettos which could be sealed off by walls and gates.

The forced change of residence by the Jews of Avignon was typical of the ghetto development. Shortly after the siege, the Old Jewry was ordered evacuated, and the Jews transferred to the exact center of the city, a quarter formerly occupied by Christians. The reason for the location is clear. The Jews were suspected of dissatisfaction. To the medieval mind, as to the modern authoritarian mind, dissatisfaction was indistinguishable from disloyalty. Tales of Jewish treachery far in the past, during the Saracenic wars, were invented, and used as a pretext for placing the Jews as far as possible from the city's outer fortifications.

The New Jewry was a city within a city, and is in fact referred to as “*la cité juive*” in one document. Today its changed outlines can be recognized only by such street names as the Rue Abraham and the Rue Jacob, but the original appearance of the ghetto is known from old pictorial maps. It was roughly one hundred yards square, and was con-

nected to the rest of the city by two gates. One, at the end of the Rue Abraham, from the year 1398 onward was closed by a drawbridge, which the Jews were said to have requested "for their own security" (*pro securitate ejusdem*).

The ghetto system made no provision for an increase in population. As the community grew to more than one thousand people in the 14th century, the only solution to the housing problem was to build upward. Tenements of five and six stories were constructed, some of which survive, surmounted by shabby penthouses of later date. These tall structures cut off all light from the labyrinth of narrow, dead-end streets below. The chronic shortage of water made it impossible, in spite of valiant efforts, to keep the area clean. The houses, packed together, were poorly ventilated. The lower floors were not only perpetually dark, but dank and miserable. In times of plague, which struck Avignon repeatedly, the ghetto became a deathtrap.

Yet it was during outbreaks of plague that the intellectual vitality and moral courage of the Jews came strikingly to the notice of their Christian neighbors. The Jewish physicians were beyond praise. In the epidemic of 1506 Master Videz, an exceptionally gallant figure, voluntarily visited cadavers after the first alarm to identify symptoms of pestilence: this was considered far beyond his duty as a doctor. Together with Moses Alphandery, Samuel of Lunel, and Joshua of Cavaillon, Videz joined with Christian civic leaders and helped organize municipal resistance to the plague through remarkably modern quarantine techniques, including the burning of victims' possessions, which unfortunately caused the sick to conceal their symptoms as long as possible.\* At first a hospital outside the walls was denied to the Jews, but a barn was at last provided for this purpose in the 17th century. The hospital proved a mixed blessing. The patients were attended by Dominicans, who zealously tried to convert them, and occasionally baptized the helpless against their will.

\*Not all Jews were as unselfish as the doctor Videz. In 1721, after plague had erupted at Marseilles, strict precautions were taken at Avignon. But Mordecai Delpuget had purchased contaminated goods and secretly brought them to his house, thereby causing his death, his wife's, and those of seventy-one other Jews inside the ghetto.

IN ADDITION to their traditional distinction in medicine, the Jews were preeminent in the study of all the natural sciences. Southern France was one of the great cultural transmission points of the Middle Ages. It was through the passes of the Pyrenees that from half-Moslem Spain—the Spain Maimonides knew—many Semitic words came into Latin and thence into French and English. A large proportion of them, significantly, were scientific, artistic, and musical terms: azimuth, zenith, zero, alembic, azure, lute, guitar, fanfare. Jews translated learned treatises from Greek and Arabic into Hebrew, and aided Christian scholars to translate them into Latin. The debt of modern civilization to the Jewries of the Mediterranean shorelands, particularly to the great Talmudical academy at Lunel, has perhaps yet to be appreciated fully. Too often, for reasons of prudence, the Christian scholar concealed his association with Jewish colleagues, and the collaboration has been lost to history.

But Jews did more than act as intermediaries between Moslem and Christian culture. They were outstanding scientists and speculative thinkers in their own right. One of the greatest of them, Rabbi Levi ben Gershon (1288-1344)—Gersonides—lived in the ghetto of Avignon. If Gersonides was not actually the inventor (he may have been preceded by Jacob ben Makir, one of the great Jewish physicians of Montpellier, who died in 1308) of the Jacob's Staff, the quadrant used by all the famous Renaissance navigators, including Columbus, he was at least among its earliest and foremost developers. As an astronomer, he anticipated Copernicus, and his work was still valuable when Kepler took pains to consult his writings in the 17th century. As an applied physicist, he experimented with a *camera obscura* long before Leonardo da Vinci. As a courageous independent philosopher, he was a forerunner of Spinoza, and like him earned condemnation by his coreligionists for impiety. Gersonides' masterpiece, *Wars of the Lord*, was called "Wars Against the Lord" by his more orthodox critics. Christian readers were not so severe. Pope Clement VI, from the eminence of his massive palace high above the Jewry, in 1342 ordered the astronomical portions of the work to be translated into Latin. This was a stroke of luck for posterity,

for when the original Hebrew version was printed in the 15th century, these sections of the manuscript were omitted for their lack of theological importance.

In the development of printing, too, the Jews were pioneers. Cecil Roth has shown that, some six years before Gutenberg is thought to have set up his press, a member of the Avignon community in 1444 commissioned a wandering German craftsman to cut a Hebrew font "according to the art of writing artificially."

In spite of the humiliation of ghetto life and the marked costume, in spite of the misery and congestion of their locked-in community, the Jews remained intellectually and spiritually dynamic. The source of this vitality, as it had been from antiquity, was the synagogue. Today, facing the pleasant little square of the Place Jerusalem (it was merely a tiny open space during the days of the ghetto), a 19th-century temple stands on the emplacement of the medieval synagogue which was erected after 1226. Although it was remodeled several times, its location was never changed during the six centuries before its destruction by fire in 1844. The present synagogue, coldly neo-classical, can tell very little of its predecessor. Nor do the modern Jews of Avignon, none of them descended from the old community, but immigrants from Eastern Europe, Turkey, and North Africa, much resemble the vanished residents of the ghetto, even in their religious devotions. How great a loss there has been at Avignon, will be seen at Carpentras and Cavaillon.

## II

**T**HE road to Carpentras, which is fifteen miles northeast of Avignon, follows the easy terrain of the Comtat Venaissin through lines of cypress and eucalyptus trees; on either side stretch fields of asparagus, tomatoes, cucumbers, and strawberries. Set well back, the stone farmhouses and out-buildings are massed together architectonically, as in a Cézanne.

This rich province (approximately embracing the territory of the modern département of the Vaucluse) fell to the share of the Church after the Albigensian Crusade, and was formally ceded by France to the Holy See in 1274. Seven French-speaking Popes, all heavily obligated to the French

Crown, were to find the Comtat a fortunate acquisition during the 14th century. Rome, torn by the savage feuds of the Colonna and the Orsini, became uninhabitable for them. Under strong pressure from Philip IV of France, the first Pontiff to exile himself from Italy, the Gascon Clement V, in 1309, came to Carpentras to live. The city proved too small, and too far from the main routes of communication to serve as the seat of the Papacy. Therefore Clement's successor, John XXII, five years later established the papal court at Avignon, which had not been included with the Comtat in the peace settlement, but which Clement VI purchased in 1348 from the tragic Jeanne des Baux, Countess of Provence and Queen of the Angevin House of Naples.

It was during the reign of Clement VI (1342-1352) and of his predecessor Benedict XII (1334-1342) that the immense Papal Palace was constructed and fortified and the city walls rebuilt and strengthened. Today these formidable installations, confronting the castle of Philip IV across the Rhone, still give a spectacular impression of the resurgence of Avignon under the Popes. But for all their brilliant show, the fortifications were defensive in spirit and strategy, a sign of weakness and fear. The Popes could not find troops even to crush the bands of brigands who roamed the countryside, but instead bought them off. In 1377 Gregory XI found the courage to return to anarchic Rome. He was followed on the throne of Peter by an Italian.

The Popes came to southern France at a particularly trying moment for the Jews of Western Europe. The new national governments, now that their centralized fiscal systems had been established and a class of great Christian capitalists had arisen, one by one despoiled and expelled their Jewish populations. Jews had been exiled from the royal domain of France as early as 1182, but the first permanent expulsion on a national rather than feudal basis was from England, in 1290. France followed suit in 1306, but then recalled the Jews at the demand of the people, who were exacerbated by the cupidity of Christian moneylenders. Periodically throughout the 14th century the Jews were chased from the kingdom of France and readmitted, in continually dwindling numbers, until at the time of their final exile in 1394,

they were reduced from an original one hundred thousand to twenty thousand.

Refugees thronged the papal possessions. The Popes, who were themselves in political and financial straits, received them. This clemency held more than just a materialistic motive: the "Vicars of Christ" were morally bound, as defenders of the Old Testament, to protect the Jews and, if possible, convert them to the New. Christian charity, moreover, and humanistic enlightenment (demonstrated in Clement VI's admiration for Gersonides) played some part in Church policy, which also extended asylum to other cast-outs: to lepers (who with the Jews were accused of poisoning wells in time of plague), and even to heretics.

Criminals and escaped prisoners, smugglers and counterfeiters, swarmed in, too, as well as a floating population of gamblers and prostitutes, plying their trades at the fairs of nearby Beaucaire. Hundreds of hangers-on attached themselves to the pontifical court, to profit from the extreme laxity in the entourages of the cardinals. Simony was widespread, and Avignon became notorious. Petrarch, castigating the city as "a sewer in which runs all the filth of the universe," retired to the lovely Fountain of the Vaucluse; the laureate failed to add that Avignon in the 14th century was surpassed in venality and licentiousness only by Rome.

AS EARLY as 1303, Avignon and the Comtat were called "the paradise of the Jews." The description needs correction. The comparatively mild conditions of papal rule constituted a refuge for Jews—for a handful of the wealthy ones, perhaps a comfortable refuge—but hardly more. How far from being a paradise they were could be seen at a glance, miles away, before the destruction of the ghetto of Carpentras in the last century: in a painting by Bonet at the municipal museum, depicting the city as it was in 1804, after five centuries of papal administration had ended, one sees rising out of the heart of the town, surmounting not only the ramparts and towers but also the churches and the cathedral, a rickety pyramid of Jewish dwellings, some of them small skyscrapers ten stories high, leaning against one another for support. This slum—in his splendid study of the community,\* Isidore Loeb called it a *citadelle de la douleur*—had been forced up-

ward into the Provençal sky by a tight band of bigotry. As at Avignon, the Jewry was severely restricted in area. The population expanded in later times until it eventually approached two thousand, but the perimeter was never permitted to enlarge.

With the demolition of the ghetto, the aspect of Carpentras changed considerably. The city lies on a broad rise of ground, brilliant in sunlight. The cathedral, as the Church always wished, now dominates the skyline—although the synagogue remains the city's most interesting building. A distinct air of well-being pervades Carpentras—not altogether pleasing. Carpentras is a *ville fermée*, a closed, self-centered provincial city on the order of Lyons and Bordeaux, unlike Marseilles or Avignon. The calculating faces of its shopkeepers seem indeed still to bear traces of the narrow smugness which once caused much pain to the residents of the Jewry.

Yet Carpentras can be extremely pleasant. In place of the medieval ramparts, which rivaled Avignon's, there is a circle of tree-lined boulevards. Beyond the city to the north and east, very near now and vivid, the foothills of the Mont Ventoux sweep upward from broad meadows.

How long Jews have lived here is a mystery. Since Carpentras is at some distance from the Rhone, the community may have been established much later than those along the river. But the town existed in ancient times, and it is possible that Jewish slavers led away the fettered Gauls who appear on the Roman arch, which dates from the reign of Augustus. Jews are known from an inscription to have penetrated to Peyruis, near Sisteron on the other side of the hills, by 352. In the Dauphiné, farther north and more inaccessible, Jews were settled at the latest in 894. But the earliest extant document which mentions the Carpentras community is a codex of rabbinical decisions, very likely compiled by Jacob Tam, a grandson of the great Rashi of Troyes, and therefore probably written in the first half of the 12th century.

The rabbis of Carpentras subscribed to the codex, together with the rabbis and elders of Troyes, Auxerre, Reims, Paris, and Lyons, the major Jewish centers of medieval

\*In the *Révue des Etudes Juives* of 1886.

France. Thus it may be assumed that the community was already venerable, and its rabbis had by this time established their theological leadership in Provence. Carpentras long held this local supremacy in religious matters. After the Four Holy Communities stood alone in France, it remained their spiritual chief. Avignon, even though its population was usually slightly larger, looked to it, as did Cavaillon and L'Isle-sur-Sorgue, as the arbiter of doctrine. Avignon had its scientists and poets, Carpentras its learned commentators on the Pentateuch and the Talmud.

There was also a difference in the political status of the Jews of the two cities. At Carpentras they were liegemen of the Lord Bishop, rather than (if only in a nominal sense) serfs—as were the Jews of Avignon. This distinction theoretically gave the Carpentras Jews many rights, including freedom to leave the city if they wished. Yet it did not prevent their being forcibly expelled at some unknown date, for an unknown reason, in the 13th century. They were recalled in the 1260's, however, and were residing in Carpentras when the papal officials took formal control of the Comtat Venaissin in 1274.

**A**S THE Pope's subjects, the Jews were under the over-all jurisdiction of the Papal Rector of the province; but a charter of 1276, signed by the heads of sixty-four Jewish families,\* and which was invoked in a dispute as late as 1789, made it clear that they were still the Bishop's men. In this charter they were accorded the title of *cives*—citizens—and as such given guarantees against arbitrary tax levies and mob violence. The Bishop was to receive in exchange a heavy yearly tribute in cash and kind. Among their obligations, the Jews were enjoined to deliver to the Bishop the untrimmed tongues of all the cattle they slaughtered, and to furnish bedding for his guests at the episcopal palace. If the terms seem severe, they were scarcely more so than those imposed

on Christian burghers, who protested bitterly against the Bishop's exactions. In fact, the arrangement worked well for half a century. It left the Jews free to regulate their internal affairs, which were administered by elected elders known as *baylons*. Property requirements made it impossible for poor Jews to stand for election; and therefore, in each of the other communities as well as at Carpentras (internal autonomy took virtually the same form in all four Jewries) the councils of *baylons* constituted self-perpetuating oligarchies of wealthy Jews, very similar to the municipal councils which governed Christians. The rabbis had no place in the civic government of the communities.

One of the most interesting articles of the charter of 1276, which is altogether one of the most illuminating documents of the Middle Ages, mentions both the urban and rural real estate of the Jews—a strong indication that no ghetto yet existed. It also speaks of a synagogue and of the possibility of its being rebuilt or remodeled. This temple stood on the street still known as the Rue de la Vieille-Juiverie, near the walls, in a situation very like that of the primitive Jewry of Avignon. Evidently it had been a Jewish street for ages.

In 1322 disaster fell. Two years previous, when the fanatic rabble known as the Pastoureaux staged massacres throughout France, Pope John XXII had loyally protected the Jews in his domains. During the plague that erupted in 1321 and 1322, he denied tales of contamination of the water supply, and again warded off pogroms. But late in 1322 he vacillated, and at last gave way to the hysteria. Refugees were crowding into the Comtat from the ravaged northern Jewries. Outraged, local Christians appealed to the Pope, who responded with the kind of caprice that often bent pontifical judgment of the Jews: he banished *all* Jews, the old residents with the newcomers, from the province, which fortunately did not include Avignon and southern Provence. The synagogues of the Comtat were demolished, and churches erected in their place. The Jews, compelled to leave on short notice, suffered heavy financial loss.

They were permitted to return at the end of 1343, twenty-one years later. Only twelve of the original sixty-four families came back

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\*The document has survived, together with the signatures. The community was composed largely of southern families, bearing the names of Jewries in Provence and Languedoc: Avignon, Narbonne, Lunel, Monteux, Orange, Montpellier, Carcassonne. Others had purely Hebrew names: Cohen and Abraham.

to Carpentras. They were impoverished, and the Bishop (who, since they were a source of revenue, wished them to stay) eased their obligations until such time as the number of families reached ninety. For an annual payment of six pounds of ginger and pepper, or the very considerable equivalent in money, he also permitted them a synagogue and a cemetery.

The Jews did not resettle in the Old Jewry. Instead—it would seem voluntarily—they occupied the Rue de la Muse in the center of the city. There they rented a building from a Christian notary, Bertrand Pauli, which served as a synagogue until the landlord asked them to move, in 1367. Thereupon three Jewish dignitaries, Isaac Tauroci, Jacob Tamani, and Caracausa Bonafos, presented to the authorities a request for a permanent house of worship. The request was modest enough. The Jews asked only that the edifice be equal in size to the temple destroyed in 1322, which had measured no more than forty-five feet in length and twenty-six feet in width and height. When permission was finally granted, the length was reduced to thirty-three feet, and the Jews were warned that their ceremonies must be “no more beautiful, ample, and pompous” than those held in the old synagogue.

The authorization contained another provision to which little significance may have been attached at the time. It specified that the new synagogue be located in a street where more Jews lived than Christians. As it turned out, a suitable site was found near the building just vacated in the Rue de la Muse. Perhaps it was the same building: the eviction and subsequent proceedings may have been merely a device to enable Pauli to sell the property.

Construction of a new building—or refurbishment of the old one—began immediately; no records of the project have survived. It seems possible that the Jews not only erected a completely new structure, but also provided the necessary skilled labor themselves. Although it was already 1367, well into the Middle Ages, and Jewish craftsmanship was in decline, a Jewish stonemason and a mason are known to have lived in Avignon in the 14th century and to have worked at Arles—which was ten miles farther from their homes than Carpentras.

WHAT dramatically distinguished the synagogue from those of antiquity or of modern times, and even from contemporary structures in central European cities such as Prague, was its tightly compressed plan. Rather than a generous open hall, freely developed architecturally on an adequate site, this building had to make the most of a tiny lot. Accordingly, a two-story scheme was adopted, with the upper floor reserved for men and the lower for women. Since the height of the building was also restricted, additional space could be got only by digging. Therefore at Carpentras, as elsewhere, the lower level was not a true ground floor, but a half-cellar to which one descended by a flight of steps. This allowed the men's chamber above to be relatively high-ceilinged and thus achieve an effect of relative grandeur. It also honored a Biblical formula of the Diaspora, when temples were first placed slightly below ground level to echo the somber music of Psalm 130: “Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord.”

The two-story arrangement was usual in the West during the later Middle Ages. It was employed at Rouen in Normandy, as well as at Carpentras and its sister communities in the south. At Lincoln in England, much altered but partly intact, survives a similar and very fascinating 12th-century structure called “Jews' Court,” which Helen Rosenau has shown to have been a synagogue: the main feature of its upper floor is a simple niche which housed the Scrolls of the Law. Possibly it owes its traditional name to the fact that it served also as a law court. In their confined situations, medieval synagogues were used for a variety of purposes. The two stories gave the small buildings a needed flexibility and privacy for different functions. Their thick walls and narrow windows could make them doughty little fortresses too, if need arose.

The upper portion of the Carpentras synagogue of 1367 has vanished, but beneath the beautiful room that replaced it in the 18th century the Gothic vaults of the dark, half-subterranean women's synagogue hold staunchly. Here, by candlelight, the women followed the men's services through a vent in the ceiling. They also had an aged rabbi of their own, who led their responses in a Judeo-Provençal patois, for unlike the men they knew no Hebrew. At Avignon, where

the synagogue was similarly divided, a Christian visitor\* in 1599 noted that the women's rabbi was blind.

For nearly a century the Jews of Carpentras worshipped in the synagogue without fear of molestation. The Rue de la Muse in time became known as the Juiverie de la Muse, and later simply as the Juiverie. Some Christian residences and shops remained among the majority of Jewish ones. The population of the community had increased again: forty-two family heads contributed to the repair of the cathedral in 1400 (they helped pay for the elegant south portal, in flamboyant Gothic, which is the outstanding element of the church today, and is called the Porte Juive). The departure of the Popes for Rome had caused a financial decline, but this was felt more keenly at Avignon than in the Comtat. The Vicar General at Avignon and the Rector at Carpentras were invariably Italian, and less disposed to be fanatics than the French. Conditions were not perfect, but could have been worse. Expulsions continued sporadically in the north: from the French-speaking provinces of the Holy Roman Empire in 1365, from Lorraine in 1409, from the city of Lyons (where Jews had been allowed to remain after the final exile from France) in 1420; there were few pockets of tolerance left in the West.

The Jews had reason to pray. And each year, in the autumn dusk, two virgins stood in the small synagogue garden, and held a white thread and a black thread against the sky. When they could no longer distinguish the colors, the long Day of Atonement would begin.

**A**FTER eighty years of tranquility, during which the community gradually spread from the Jewry to three adjacent streets, and neglected to wear the signs of infamy, wrangling again broke out between the Jews and Christians of Carpentras in the middle of the 15th century. From 1450 on, the town records are filled with terse comments concerning the Jews, so cryptic, however, that

\*It was usual for curious strangers to inspect the ghettos. In 1730 the Prince de Conti was delighted by his visit to the synagogue of Carpentras. Stendhal, when he passed through Avignon, did not fail to notice the beauty of the women of the Juiverie.

it is difficult to know what the real disputes were about. Among the problems dealt with were taxes, allegations of unfair practices by Jewish brokers, a charge that the kosher abattoir was close to the Christian one. In 1455, apparently in a move to compel the Jews to yield certain concessions, the authorities threatened to transfer their quarter to some other part of the city.

The arrival of a new Rector, Angelo Geraldini, temporarily saved the situation. The Christians carried their case to Pius II at Rome, and in two Bulls of 1459 he made it clear that the Jews were not to forget their proper humility: he renewed several old pariah laws, and reimposed the *rouella* or little wheel. Christian emotion was stirred up when a rival delegation, led by Salves de l'Argentière and Vides de Lates, traveled to Rome and obtained abrogation of these edicts.

The residential clause of the synagogue agreement of 1367, seemingly innocuous in itself, appeared now to be open to conflicting interpretations. There were outcries in the city council that the Jewish quarter had been unlawfully and needlessly enlarged. Negotiations followed, and a compromise was arranged; then on Friday, June 13, 1460, riots shook the city. If there were other motives behind this outburst, anti-Semitism was doubtless the strongest. A mob pillaged the Jewry. The authorities, in response to popular clamor, reconsidered the settlement just made. Six months later the community was confined to the Juiverie and a single adjoining street—approximately half its former area.

Christian zealots were not satisfied. Additional complaints were heard, and in 1485 a tragic event brought matters to a head. The County of Provence, which except for the Comtat remained the last French- or Provençal-speaking territory open to Jews, expelled its ancient communities. Refugees began entering the papal enclave. The influx at Carpentras was particularly heavy. The new arrivals overflowed the area allotted to the Jews, and sought lodgings among Christians. It was difficult to maintain order. For some time it had been necessary to post special police in the Jewish quarter to prevent violence by the peasants who came to the city to market and celebrate the grape harvest. This October it was scarcely possible

to control them. The burghers, who had never been happy about paying armed men to defend Jews, sought to rid themselves of this vexing autumnal expense. Simultaneously, they hoped to solve the problem of Jewish expansion to other parts of the city. The council suggested to the Jews that, in their own interest, they should be limited to a single street protected by security gates.

The Jews replied that although they found the solution distasteful, they were nevertheless disposed to accept it. They were weary of the onslaughts of the drunken harvesters, and they wished to be absolved of the charge that they were a financial burden to the rest of the city. They themselves drew up the document which made the Jewry a true ghetto.

The term "ghetto,"\* however, was not used. It appears only once, at the late date of 1736, among all the official papers which mention the Jewry of Carpentras. To both Jews and non-Jews, the Juiverie was known always as *la carriero*—Provençal for "the Street"—or, in French, *la carrière*. (From the Italian *carriera*, a place closed by barriers, originally for the purpose of horse racing.) In Hebrew the name for street is *mesilla*, and was used in the community's records. But because, as their contacts with outside Jewry grew rare, the Comtadins changed *s* sounds, and sometimes *th*, to *f*, it was pronounced *mefilla*.

Among the ten articles of the ghetto agreement, the Jews insisted on several points:

1. That the Carrière have at each end a gate which could be locked and barred from within. The gates were to remain open by day, except in case of danger; at night they were to be closed, providing no Christians were still within.

2. That the doors and windows of Christian buildings facing the Carrière should be either walled up or barred.

3. That the Jews should have a year in

\*The origin of the term has been much debated. The famous ghetto of Venice was originally situated near a gun foundry, *gietto* in Italian, and this has been accepted by some scholars as its source. Another possibility, as Abram Leon Sachar has noted, is that it is a degeneration of *Judaca*, one of the many names given to Jewish quarters (in France, *Juiverie* and *Juaterie* were used most frequently). However, it was only into the later "ghetto" that Jews were herded by legal compulsion.

which to divest themselves of their property outside the Carrière, which they might rent to Christians in the interim.

4. That although Christians should have free passage of the Carrière by day, ecclesiastical processions through the street were to be discontinued. In such processions, the clerks accompanying the priests had taken the occasion to pelt the Jews with stones.

The last seems not to have been acceded to, and the Jews were to experience much woe from future processions. The other articles were approved successively by the Rector, the Cardinal-Legate at Avignon, and Pope Innocent VIII in March, October, and December of 1487. Early in 1488, construction of the pointed Gothic portals closing in the Jews began. They stood until the 19th century.

THE Jews found themselves enclosed in a street 270 feet long and dog-legged in shape. At the bend it widened slightly to form a small open place from which the synagogue, surrounded by a cluster of other buildings, could be entered. Overhead, the houses rose ever taller, until they reached an average of seven and eight stories. In the year 1743 there were some 50 such tenements lining the narrow street, divided into 168 apartments. The population was usually about 1,200. Occasionally the construction gave way and houses fell, burying their occupants in wreckage. The Jews were forbidden by papal edict to chant or carry tapers during their funeral processions, once these had reached the Christian streets outside the Carrière, on their way to the cemetery. By another pontifical decree, strictly enforced, Jewish tombstones were not permitted to be dignified by inscriptions.

It was impossible, the Jews soon found, to keep the Carrière clean. They appealed in vain for the right to a fountain; during three hundred years they were forced to send outside for water. The drainage system was an abomination. The street, even under the brilliant sun, lay in darkness. Only the poorest Jews, forced to live on the roofs, enjoyed the Provençal sky. Rather than carry their provisions up the many flights of stairs, they hoisted them with ropes and pulleys.

Under the pressure of the Counter Reformation conditions grew steadily worse. The 16th and 17th centuries were the most

oppressive in history for the Jews in the Catholic countries of Western Europe. In 1525 Pope Clement VII, incensed that they were concealing the yellow badges which they had been ordered by law to display prominently, substituted a more conspicuous sign of infamy: the yellow hat. A fine of one hundred ducats—about \$250 of our money—was the penalty for non-compliance. Boys were to commence wearing their pointed bonnets at fourteen, girls to attach yellow ribbons to their coifs at the age of twelve.

Demands for the expulsion of the Jews from the Comtat and Avignon never ceased. Twice they were successful: Pius V in 1569 and Clement VIII in 1593 issued orders of banishment which were at least partly enforced before they were annulled. Repeatedly, in 1606, 1612, 1614, 1617, 1618, 1620, 1622, 1623, and 1638—and still once more in 1693—Rome was petitioned by diehards to expel the Jews; but the requests were denied. There was now no place in the West for the Jews to go, except to the Protestant north, or beyond the Rhine to the communities of the Ashkenazim. Only the rich could afford the long journeys, hindered by a profusion of border regulations. The ghettos of Italy were even more miserable and overcrowded than those of southern France. In Spain and Portugal, *autos-da-fé* were in progress. Some Marranos escaped detection in the Crown territories of France, at Paris and other cities, especially Bayonne in the southwest where a small colony lived openly, but their existence was perilous: Louis XIII reaffirmed in 1615 the edict of exile of 1394, which carried dread punishment for evasion.

The Four Holy Communities at last stood completely alone. The small groups of Jews who had lived since the early Middle Ages in the villages of the Comtat—at Malaucène, Valabrègue, Monteux, and other outlying places—had been chased into the *carrières* of the cities. Even here, however, there was no real peace. The Holy See twice a month compelled the Jews to listen to conversionist sermons designed to prove that they were no longer the Chosen People. Adolph Kober\*

\*His article in *Jewish Social Studies* of October 1944 is excellent. For an account of the disintegration of the Communities in the 19th and 20th centuries, see the thorough study by Zosa Szajkowski in the same periodical, January 1944.

has described these painful sessions, which sometimes turned into fiery debates. More often, the Jews attended with studied indifference, or cracked nuts, while impassioned clergymen—Father Justin of Carpentras was the most dedicated of these orators—harangued them. More outrageous still was the baptism of Jewish children criminally spirited away from their parents; apologies followed, but under canon law these child converts could not be returned to the *Carrière*.

THE Jews never surrendered. The cycles of Holy Days were observed with devotion and joy. Each year the drama of Purim was enacted; *Esther of Carpentras* has been embodied by Darius Milhaud and Armand Lunel into a modern opera. At the Passover table, the family sang the "Had Gadya" in Provençal; and the father recited over the unleavened bread: "*Iço es lou pan d'affliction que manjavoun nosti predecessur en terro de Misraïm*—Here is the bread of affliction which our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt." The *matzoth* were prepared in a community oven built into the substructure of the synagogue; it has survived together with its appurtenances: the long-handled wooden shovels and the massive stone kneading tables, donated by Gad of Digne in 1652. The Jews, in a region fond of pastry, also baked *coudoles*, cakes made with sweet wine and oil. Many Christians, forbidden by law to taste the delicacies, enjoyed them in secret.

In theory, if not in fact, all amicable intercourse between Jews and non-Jews was prohibited. The more enlightened members of both groups refused to accept such segregation, as is eloquently proven in the correspondence between the great humanist and nobleman, Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc, and Solomon Azubi, rabbi of Carpentras from 1617 to 1635. Rabbi Azubi, who was born in Sofia, Bulgaria, was one of the many noted scholars and theologians called from other countries by the Comtadin Jews. In an effort to keep their intellectual standard high, and their links with world Jewry intact, they imported rabbis from Amsterdam and Prague, and from cities in Germany and Poland. Another Jewish humanist, Juda Messer Leon of Avignon, in the 17th century wrote a rather garbled version in Hebrew of the story of Petrarch and Laura.

The Jews did not fail to relish whatever social and intellectual delights they were allowed. In addition to holidays, the residents of the *Carrière* of Carpentras celebrated two great local *fêtes* at the end of November and the beginning of April. Events unknown, in 1512 and 1682, were the occasions for extraordinary celebrations, with special thanksgiving prayers; kosher wine flowed at weddings, births, and circumcisions, and was dispensed at a tavern in the *Carrière*, which seems always to have been kept by women. The wine was made from the grapes of a vineyard adjacent to the cemetery. To go outside the walls to tend the vines gave the Jews a rare chance to relax in the countryside. There is an instance of a party of Jews picnicking outside the city on a Sunday, only to be reproved by the clergy for keeping the Christian coachman from mass.

Repeatedly, even when the rest of the populace was ready to cease bickering, the clergy exasperated the Jews by displaying the cross in the *Carrière*. Once, as the chanting clerks passed their homes, the Jews opened the sewage taps; in revenge, they were heavily fined. On another occasion, the Jews were accused of garbing a crucifix in a harlequin's costume, capping it with a yellow bonnet, and parading it the length of the *Carrière*. For this sacrilege the Bishop ordered them to erect a marble cross before the cathedral, where it stood for two centuries until a Tree of Liberty was planted in its place in 1793. Jewish women were no more cowed than the men. They would spit irreverently when provoked by Christians, and earn public floggings for their courage.

Today, in her kitchen-utensils shop on the Rue des Halles, Mademoiselle Blanche Mossé—the only descendant of the old community who still lives in Carpentras—carries on the tradition. This proud, brave, scornful spinster stayed through the Nazi occupation, and by sheer moral force, rallying the other citizens around her, saved the synagogue. It is *her* synagogue. She remains aloof from the small colony of East Europeans who have prayed there since the end of the war. To her, "they are not Jews"—at least they are not on the order of her father, Armand Mossé, the erudite historian of the *Carrière*, or her ancestor Salomon Mossé

who in 1786, possessing a fortune of 100,000 livres, was one of its wealthiest men, or of countless other Mossés, going back to the 13th-century family rolls, and further, into antiquity. The tourist must apply to her to see the synagogue, for she will not permit anyone else to act as guide.

THE austere façade of the synagogue—an unadorned wall pierced by a single door—remains as unobtrusive in the center of Carpentras as it was meant to be. Centuries of persecution had taught the Jews of Carpentras, by the time the new synagogue was begun in 1741, that prudence must be the better part of their architectural wisdom. Today the synagogue, once in the thick of the ghetto, stands exposed as the community never dreamed; stripped of the surrounding houses of the *Carrière*, it seems excessively plain. It fronts on the Place de la Mairie, one of the many pleasant squares in France which have supplanted scabrous medieval quarters. The sunlight, pouring into what was once a dark ghetto, catches the usual inscription on the near-by city hall: *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*.

Inside the synagogue's doorway is a modern vestibule (rebuilt in the restoration of 1930) whose staircase rises above the primitive women's synagogue, which is completely hidden by later construction and no longer visited. At the head of the stairs, well away from the street, is the real entrance.

The doors open to a wonderful display of light: the precise and delicate light of the 18th century, entering through large upper windows, and passing across galleries into a lofty and sumptuous room. An effect of elegance pervades the rich classical detail of fluted columns and carven garlands, the handsome balustrades of the galleries, the wainscoting and ironwork, the chandeliers of crystal and bronze. The décor is profuse and gay and polite—as in a Watteau. It is Louis Quinze—at its best a winning enough style, for all its artifice. In this provincial southern town, it is captivating.

Directly across from the entrance, dominating the long eastern wall—the side of Jerusalem—is a resplendent Ark of the Law, neo-classical in style, showing in its marbled and gilded stucco a Mediterranean liveliness and warmth. Provence is close to Italy, and the great baroque Ark of Padua was not far

away when this one was designed. But the preciseness and delicacy of the proportions are altogether French.

The central unit of the Ark itself, framed by engaged Ionic columns, and hung with velvets, is set off from the rest by a low pedestal and a grille of finely wrought iron. To either side of the Ark, set in large formal panels and wreathed in gilt moldings, are the Tablets of the Law. At each end is a niche: the one on the far left holds a vase which Madame de Pompadour might have treasured, but which must hold some hermetic Jewish significance; on the far right, a golden and tiny armchair, upholstered in red satin, carries a Hebrew inscription embroidered in gold thread—this is the symbolic throne of the Prophet Elijah, the harbinger of the Messiah.\*

The Ark determines the scale of the rest of this lordly room. The line of its cornice is continued in the skillfully turned balustrades of the upper galleries which run to north and south, where they cross the short sides of the building, and then, completing their circuit of the vessel, return to meet on the west. Here, mounted above the entrance way on four Doric pillars, opposite the Ark, is the synagogue's other major feature: the *bima*, the elevated dais from which the services were sung, and the Torah—spread beneath the canopy of an elaborate lectern—was read to the congregation below. This liturgical arrangement, with its possibilities for drama, was used in all four of the Holy Communities. Although a similar scheme was employed in some Italian synagogues, it was apparently a local creation, designed to meet the special needs of the Comtadin Jewry, whose liturgy, as Cecil Roth has shown, developed quite independently from that of the rest of the Diaspora during centuries of isolation.

**S**UCH a synagogue, admirably designed, and spacious in its proportions, had long been desired at Carpentras. Until the 18th

\*Although Elijah is traditionally the patron of circumcisions, the thrones which existed for the Prophet in the synagogues of the Comtat were never taken from their niches for such ceremonies. They signify only the Messianic tradition, and are quite different from the "Elijah chairs" on which babies were placed for circumcisions elsewhere in Europe.

century, however, the ecclesiastical authorities had refused the Jews permission to enlarge, much less rebuild, their house of worship of 1367. Some repairs were made in 1677, and possibly at unrecorded earlier times; it was not until 1714 that any substantial alteration of the venerable structure was allowed: a wall was opened and a few extra square feet of precious space was gained. In 1730 the lighting of the men's synagogue on the upper level was improved by the construction of an octagonal lantern tower; it was made of plaster, very likely a flimsy affair. At this time the decoration of the building was also renewed with plaster ornamentation.

The joy in the Carrière may be imagined when the Bishop, Monsignor Malachi d'Inguibert, at last authorized extensive alteration and enlargement in 1740. The Jews seized this chance—it is doubtful whether the Bishop had so ambitious an undertaking in mind—to reconstruct the building virtually from the foundations upward. The women were to be given new accommodations† aboveground; their lightless ancient chamber was to be abandoned, but since its vaults were solid, it was retained as a structural support. The bakery, too, was to be saved and incorporated with the foundations. Deeper down still, the women's ritual bath, the *mikveh*, hewn with its dark twisting staircase from the living rock, would also remain.

The community had the wisdom to engage one of the most gifted architects of the time, a Christian—no Jews now practiced architecture in the West: Antoine d'Allemand, royal architect and engineer to the King of France. This nobleman (he was the Seigneur de Fenouillet) was also rumored to be a Free Mason. No investigation, fortunately, was made by the Holy Office of the Inquisition, which was still in operation at Carpentras, for d'Allemand's subsequent loyalty to the Jews might point to the truth of the rumor.

No better man could have been found

†These remained strictly separated from the men's. The women were placed in a narrow passage, hidden by lattice-work, behind the arcades on the north side of the room. In the last days of the community the women occupied the upper galleries, which in the 18th century were reserved for the choir of men and boys.

for the job. The Jews, from their cemetery and vineyard outside the walls, had a close view of his most recent project, a majestic aqueduct conceived on a scale which recalled Roman construction. In designing the synagogue, the architect's one regret must have been that he would have to confine his imagination to the interior, and forsake a façade. The elegance he was capable of giving to the exterior of a building can be seen in the quietly rich façade of the Hôtel-Dieu of Carpentras, which was executed a few years afterward.

Work began on the synagogue in October 1741, with "a great number of workers"—probably all Christian—under d'Allemand's supervision. The Bishop attended the casting of the foundations, in order to make sure the Jews would not exceed the new dimensions allowed them. For once Monsignor d'Inguibert was affable. He remarked that the Jews were probably taking liberties, but allowed them to proceed nevertheless. The Jews were to learn to their sorrow that this avowed anti-Semite could not be trusted.

As the temple rose, the Jews found that they had made the mistake of wishing it to be beautiful and filled with light. A further mistake was in wishing it to be lofty, as the Talmud states a synagogue should be. Angry recriminations issued from zealous Catholics—*li zelanti cattolici della Citta*, as they styled themselves in Italian in a letter of protest to the Holy Office. They charged that the synagogue was "much more magnificent and vast than its predecessor" and, though not yet at its full height, so "dominated the whole of the city, that its superb mass could be seen from miles away." The Jews had, in fact, raised it only from twenty-eight to forty feet, but this made it taller than two neighboring churches. "Such a situation," the letter concluded, "should not be tolerated, for it would seem that the Jews, reduced to servitude by their own fault, would wish to demonstrate—by this structure—their superiority to Christians."

The Reverend Father Inquisitor and the Bishop did not fail to agree. An inquiry was held. D'Allemand, plainly reluctant to see his work mutilated, defended it on technical grounds: the new roof height was necessary, he testified, in order to protect the structure from rain water draining off adjacent buildings. His objection was immediately ruled

out: the old synagogue had withstood the rains for centuries. Any objection would have been ruled out—this was a malicious comedy being staged before the kangaroo court. It was claimed that the synagogue rose higher than the Cathedral of Saint-Siffrein, which like many provincial episcopal seats, is a comparatively small monument. The Jews replied that the Cathedral was actually taller by some twelve feet.\* They added that they were poor, and could not afford to demolish the new building, as some Christians were demanding. To this it was answered that, except for Livorno, the Carrière was the wealthiest of ghettos. Had not the Jews already expended an immense sum on the construction? The question was embarrassing: by 1743, some 30,000 livres—a large amount for the times—had gone to the temple.

The Church's decision came as expected. The imposing roof was removed, and the walls reduced by a total of fifteen feet. This was found to be lower than the old synagogue. Now it was the Jews who cried out angrily. Monsignor d'Inguibert equivocated, but in September 1743, finally made concessions. The walls were raised slightly and the interior covered with a temporary shelter against the seasonal rains, which had begun to fall.

STILL other difficulties had arisen. The windows of the synagogue, opened up into formerly blank walls, were declared an inconvenience by the Order of the White Penitents, whose church of Sainte-Marie-de-la-Charité backed on the Carrière. The Jewish services, the Penitents claimed, interfered with their own ceremonies. The Jews promised to chant softly, but the splendid east windows above the Ark (since reopened) were walled up. The Jews opened new windows elsewhere, only to have them blocked. The Bishop personally examined every modification. He brought experts with him who minutely measured the walls, as they were lowered again and raised. Costs grew, but the Jews strove desperately to preserve what they could of the original design. By 1748 it seems to have been much as it is today, with a permanent roof in place.

\*It is now impossible to say precisely what their height was at the time; but the argument seems reasonable.

Still the affair dragged on. Quarreling had not ended when Monsignor d'Inguibert died in 1753. The citizens of his native Carpentras, whom he had provided with a hospital and a library, erected a marble tomb for him, in the chapel of the Hôtel-Dieu. His bust shows a benign clergyman, accompanied by the allegorical figures of Charity nursing her infant, and Knowledge weeping.

Forty-three years passed between the commencement of the synagogue and its consecration in 1784. The community had put its soul into the structure—few religious monuments of the 18th century can boast its peculiar intensity. It shows the underlying seriousness of which the Louis Quinze style was capable, and which has been noticed too rarely. Here it achieves an impressiveness of purpose which was perhaps unattainable in the pleasure houses of the nobility or, for different reasons, in most churches of the period. The synagogue, like many Louis XV churches—the Chapel of the Pénitents Noirs, for example, in Avignon—has been described as “profane,” and compared to a salon. But its courteous mood and cheerful detail nowhere give way to frivolity. It speaks the gracious idiom of its time for the reason that it knew no other.

This temple, constructed at the end of the *ancien régime*, was a symbol of things to come. Once again, Jews were erecting spacious open halls, letting in the light wherever they could, as they had in antiquity. The new synagogues, drawing inspiration not only from baroque Italy, perhaps not even primarily from it, but from Protestant structures such as the lost Huguenot Temple of Charenton, near Paris, looked forward and not back. They anticipated the separation of church and state which the Enlightenment had made inevitable. The Provençal *scola* of Carpentras was part of a much wider movement, most conspicuous perhaps in the synagogues of Amsterdam and London, but present too, in the construction of the Touro Synagogue at Providence in 1763, in the New World.

### III

**F**ROM Carpentras it is fifteen miles south to the third of the Holy Communities: L'Isle-sur-Sorgue. As its name reveals, the city is an island embraced by two arms of the river Sorgue which flows down from its

spectacular source at the Fountain of the Vaucluse, and spreads across the fertile country in twenty branches as it goes westward to the Rhone. The city, which has been called “the Venice of Provence,” is musical with flowing water. Canals pass beneath the spreading trees through the beautiful Renaissance quarters, whose mansions now are dilapidated and largely deserted. The development of a modern French textile industry has stopped the waterwheels in their turning, and the thread that was once a source of the town's prosperity is now manufactured in the smoky cities of the north.

With the town's commercial importance has also disappeared all trace of its Jewish community. Not even the size and exact location of the Carrière are known. A bare open space, called the Place de la Juiverie, defines the general area in which some three hundred and fifty Jews were living at the time of the Revolution. Probably there were never more than that; the records of the community have been lost, along with those of the entire municipality. That there was a synagogue in the Carrière, and that close relations were maintained with the Jewry of Carpentras, is all that is definitely known. Doubtless the community was ancient, although the earliest surviving document to mention it dates from 1296. It must have had some outstanding scholars: in 1633 Rabbi Azubi of Carpentras came to deliver an elegy for his friend, the learned Chaim Judah ben Jacob Sègre.

L'Isle, now so somnolent, was the scene, in 1773, of one of the most dramatic episodes in the history of Comtadin Jewry. From across the Rhine Jews had begun to re-enter France, and a colony of Ashkenazim lived more or less openly in Paris, together with rival groups of Sephardic and Comtadin Jews who had also discovered that the police were no longer strictly enforcing the expulsion edicts. Those Jews—most of them poor—who failed to find lodgings in the capital descended on the papal possessions. But the Four Communities, with troubles of their own, were reluctant to admit them, and voted alms to buy them off and send them on their way.

On September 18, 1773, a band of about one hundred wanderers, “speaking all the tongues of Europe,” burst into the ghetto of

L'Isle. The community consented to take in those who were ill or pregnant—in all, about twenty. The remainder it tried to appease with a gift of twenty-five sous each. These left, but returned the following day, their numbers swollen by additional unfortunates who had been refused admittance to the other three Carrières. The refugees were desperate to the point of violence. They forced the gates of the city, and swarmed through the streets. Soldiers arrived from Avignon to expel them, but after camping in the countryside for two days, they were back. Again troops were called in to restore order, and the entire band was evicted from the territory.

On October 8, one hundred of them again appeared before the city of L'Isle and attempted to break down the gates. By the following day they had succeeded, and they ran through the streets attacking the local Jews, who were forced to barricade themselves within the ghetto. Grenadiers from Avignon once more chased the wanderers from the province, this time for good.

Times were changing. The Carrières had begun to empty. Population was shifting, as yet barely perceptibly, from the Four Communities to a number of cities in addition to Paris, all in theory forbidden to Jews: Lyons, Bordeaux, Nantes, Nîmes, Toulouse, Montpellier, and Béziers. Still no one realized how mighty a social and political upheaval was at hand, least of all, perhaps, the Jews. At Cavaillon, on the Durance seven miles south of L'Isle, in the same year the riots took place, 1773, a new synagogue had been built, as if the community expected to stay forever.

**M**OUNTED above the great round arch of the Carrière portal, the synagogue of Cavaillon floats as a vision of lightness and refinement. Here, finally, is a Jewish façade, so ingenious and enchanting that perhaps it has been worth the centuries of waiting. Seen from the far end of the Rue Hébraïque, across the fifty-yard distance of the Carrière, the high entrance terrace—adorned with a magnificent five-arched balustrade of wrought iron—seems inaccessible. The architect has placed the terrace a full story above the street, and he has cleverly concealed the approach to it by placing a staircase behind a wall at the left. With the arch open beneath

it, and the blue Provençal sky above, the white temple seems to sit in the air, freed from the ghetto, as an incarnation of Jewish aspiration and idealism.

As the synagogue is approached, it seems to rise higher, its proportions gaining in grace and vivacity without losing vigor. All has been carefully considered: the display of ironwork against beautifully tailored stone, the baroque *cartouche* above the entrance—a conscious touch of richness which emphasizes the handsome exchange of proportions between the tall, chaste doorway, and the calm line of the windows above.

It is, nevertheless, a small structure, meant to serve a community of two hundred, who seem always to have enjoyed slightly better conditions than the Jews of the larger cities. Here, too, of course, the Carrière was a true ghetto, locked every night, but there was less congestion, the street was broader to admit the sun, and the houses not so tall. Many of the buildings have long since been removed, to give more open space and greenery than existed in the 18th century; but if the Carrière was not so pleasant as would appear today, there was not the extreme wretchedness of Carpentras and Avignon. The Jews were confined to their single enclosed street in 1453; they had evidently been living there since the preceding century. Earlier still, they had occupied a primitive Jewry in another part of the city, which was in existence at the end of the 11th century—and almost certainly before.

By 1498 the synagogue which once stood on the emplacement of the present one was in poor condition, and the Bishop of Cavaillon authorized the erection of a new building, which in turn was refurbished in 1615; its basic structure apparently remained unchanged until 1772,\* when the present synagogue was begun. Two years later the work was completed. The inscription over the doorway quotes in bold Hebrew charac-

\*The surviving ground floor beneath the present synagogue serves as its base. Next to the portal of the Carrière is a bakery in an excellent state of preservation which, it is hoped, will soon become a museum for the Jewish antiquities of the region. Other notable local collections of Jewish artifacts are at the museum of Carpentras and the Museon Arlaten at Arles. The synagogues of Carpentras and Cavaillon have been classified as national monuments and their care in the future is assured.

ters from Psalm 118: "This is the gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter—1774."

To enter this small room—it measures only twenty by thirty feet—is to step literally two centuries into the past. The building has been repaired on several occasions, and given a new roof, but otherwise it remains essentially as it was when the Jews of Cavaillon first stepped across the threshold. The fine light of the 18th century plays as delicately over the carved wainscots as at Carpentras, but the subdued intimacy, the hushed grays and green, evokes an atmosphere of a Fragonard. The decoration, more lively and more humorous, is rococo. The ironwork, light as filigree, spirals upward in the balustrades which follow the stairs to the gallery above and then sinuously trail downward again on the other side. The *baldaquin* lectern, from which the services were conducted, in an arrangement similar to that at Carpentras, is entwined with carven roses. The Ark, standing below on the east, is flanked by slender Corinthian columns, and surmounted by a *corbeille de fruits*, the melons, grapes, cherries, and peaches of the region. Hidden everywhere among the carvings are musical instruments: violins and flutes and tambours.

This superlative craftsmanship is the work of the Christian artisans of the Comtat; perhaps the greatest of them was François Isbard, the metalsmith, who spent three years on the ironwork. Christians also designed the building: a father and son named Armelin, master masons of Cavaillon, drew up the plans, which were later approved by an architect at Avignon. Even the financing was undertaken by Christian bankers, Pierre and Barnabé Desandré of Avignon, who loaned the community 6,000 livres.

Just a few years ago, after standing unused for half a century, the synagogue came into its own for a single evening. Candles were placed in the bronze chandeliers, and the eternal lamp was lit. The Grand Rabbi of Marseilles led a procession from the Ark to the upper gallery, and a service was sung. And then, in the candlelight, as the shadows lifted on the paneled walls, the music of Mozart was played.

High in the shadows, perched on a console carved to signify a bank of clouds, stood the Throne of Elijah. For centuries during the Diaspora, as synagogue replaced synagogue, the Jews had appealed to the Lord for the Messiah promised to them by the Prophet. The Messiah had not come. But in 1789, when hope seemed almost gone, came the portentous deliverance of the French Revolution.

The fresh wind of liberation blew open the gates of the ghettos, and the people of France wrested back their territory from the Church. The badge of infamy became a badge of honor. The Jews refused to remove their yellow hats, as they joined the Republicans on the barricades. The synagogues became Jacobin Clubs and Temples of Reason. Many of the precious lamps and candelabras were sent to the foundry for cannon, as the Republic fought to survive. Gold and silver Torah ornaments were cast into coins at the mint. In vain, and too late, the cities of the Comtat pleaded with the Jews to stay. But the Carrières were almost deserted now, and their demolition had begun. The Revolutions of 1830 and 1848 would remove virtually all trace of them except the synagogues. "Leave us our ruins!" cried a solitary Jew at L'Isle-sur-Sorgue. No one paid heed. The Four Holy Communities had left the Comtat Venaissin forever.

## ENCORE

### A Story

JAMES PURDY

"H E'S in that Greek restaurant every night. I thought you knew that," Merta told her brother.

"What does he do in it?" Spence said, wearily attentive.

"I don't go to Greek restaurants and I don't spy on him," she said.

"Then how do you know so certainly he is there every night?"

"How do you know anything? He's not popular at the college. He says he likes to talk to Spyro, the restaurant owner's son, about painting. I don't know what they do!"

"Well, don't tell me if you don't know," her brother said. He got up and took his hat to go.

"Of course," she continued, anxiously stepping in front of him to detain his going, "it isn't so much that Spyro is all at fault, you know. There are things wrong with Gibbs, too. As I said, he's not popular at the college. He wasn't asked to join a fraternity, you know. And the restaurant has made up for that, I suppose. It's always open for him day or night."

"Maybe you should make your own home more of a place he could bring his friends to," Spence said, a kind of cold expressionless tone in his voice.

"You would say that," she repeated almost without emotion. "I don't suppose you ever half considered what it is, I mean this home. It's not a home. It's a flat, and I'm a woman without a husband."

"I know, I know, Merta. You've done it all alone. Nobody's lifted a finger but you." His weariness itself seemed to collapse when he said this, and he looked at her with genuine feeling.

"I'm not trying to get your pity. I wanted to tell somebody what was going on at Spyro's is all. I needed to talk to somebody."

"I think Spyro's is the best place he could go," Spence said.

"And Spyro's awful father and grandfather!" she cried as though seeing something from far back of dread and ugliness.

"The Matsoukases?" Spence was surprised at her vehemence.

"Yes, the Matsoukases! With their immense eyes and black beards. Old Mr. Matsoukas, the grandfather, came here one evening, and tried to get fresh with me."

"I can hardly believe it," Spence said.

"You mean I am making it up," she accused him.

"No, no, I just can't visualize it."

"And now," she returned to the only subject which interested her, "Gibbs is there all the time as though it was his home."

"Do you talk to him about it, Merta?"

"I can't. I can't tell him and nag him about not going to the Greek restaurant at night. It's glamor and life to him, I suppose, and I suppose it is different. A different sort of place. The old man hasn't allowed them to put in juke boxes or television or anything, and you know Gibbs likes anything funny or different, and there isn't anything funny or different but maybe Spyro's. None of the college crowd goes there, and Gibbs feels he's safe there from their criticism and can drink his coffee in peace."

"Well it sounds so dull, drinking coffee in a seedy Greek restaurant, I don't see why a mother should worry about her son going

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THIS is JAMES PURDY's first story in COMMENTARY. A collection of his short stories, *Color of Darkness*, was published by New Directions in 1957, and his first novel, titled *Malcolm*, will be issued in the near future under the imprint of Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy.

there. And call me out of bed to talk about!"

"Oh Spence," she said urgently again, "he shouldn't go there. Don't you see? He shouldn't be there."

"I don't see that at all," Spence said. "And, Merta, I wish you would quit calling me up at this hour of the night to talk about your son, who is nearly a grown man by now. After all I have my profession to worry about too. . . ."

She stared at him.

"I had to talk with somebody about Spyro," she said.

"Oh it's Spyro then you wanted to talk about," Spence said, the irritation growing in his manner.

"Spyro," she said vaguely, as though it were Spence who himself had mentioned him and thus brought him to mind. "I never cared much for that young man."

"Why not?" Spence was swift to hold her to anything vague and indirect because he felt that vagueness and indirectness was her method.

"Well, Spyro does all those paintings and drawings that are so bizarre."

"Bizarre," he paused on the word. "They're nearly *good*, if you ask me."

"I don't like Spyro," she said.

"Why don't you invite him here, if your son likes him?" he put the whole matter in her hands.

"When I work in a factory all day long, Spence. . . ."

"You don't feel like doing anything but working in a factory," he said irritably.

"I thought my own brother would be a little more understanding," she said coldly angry.

"I wish you would be of Gibbs," he told her.

"Oh Spence, please, please."

"Please, nothing. You always have a problem, but the problem is you, Merta. You're old and tired and complaining, and because you can't put your finger on what's wrong you've decided that there's something wrong with your son because he goes, of all places, to a Greek restaurant and talks to Spyro

who draws rather well and who is now making a portrait of your son."

"Spence! Don't tell me that!"

"You dear old fool, Merta," he said and he put on his hat now, which she looked at, he thought, rather critically and also with a certain envy.

"That's a nice hat," she forced herself to say at last.

"Well a doctor can't look like a nobody," he said, and then winced at his own words.

"What you should do, Merta," he hurried on with another speech, "is get some sort of hobby, become a lady bowler, get on the old women's curling team, or meet up with some gent your own age. And let your son go his own way."

"You are comforting," Merta said, pretending to find humor in his words.

"**W**AS that Spence leaving just now?" Gibbs said putting down some books.

Merta held her face up to be kissed by him, which he did in a manner resembling someone surreptitiously spitting out a seed.

"And how was Spyro tonight?" she said in a booming encouraging voice whose suddenness and loudness perhaps surprised even her.

He looked at her much as he had when as a small boy she had suddenly burst into the front room and asked him what he was being so very still for.

"Spyro is doing a portrait of me," he told her.

"A portrait," Merta said, trying hard to keep the disapproval out of her voice.

"That's what it is," Gibbs said, sitting down at the far end of the room and taking out his harmonica.

She closed her eyes in displeasure, but said nothing as he played "How High the Moon." He always played, it seemed, when she wanted to talk to him.

"Would you like Spyro to come to visit us some day?" she said.

"Visit us?"

"Pay a call," she smiled, closing her eyes.

"What would he pay us a call for?" he

wondered. Seeing her pained hurt look, he expanded: "I mean what would he get to see here."

"Oh me," she replied laughing. "I'm so beautiful."

"Spyro thinks you don't like him," Gibbs said, and while she was saying *Tommyrot!* Gibbs went on: "In fact, he thinks everybody in this town dislikes him."

"They *are* the only Greeks, it's true," Merta said.

"And we're such a front family in town, of course!" he said with sudden fire.

"Well, your Uncle Spence is somebody," she began, white, and her mouth gaping a little, but Gibbs started to play on the harmonica again, cutting her off.

She tried to control her feelings tonight partly because she had such a splitting headache.

"Would you like a dish of strawberry jello?" Merta said above the sound of the harmonica playing.

"What?" he cried.

"Some strawberry jello," she repeated, a little embarrassment now in her voice.

"What would I want that for?" he asked, putting down the harmonica with impatience.

"I suddenly got hungry for some, and went out there and made it. It's set by now and ready to eat."

There was such a look of total defeat on her old gray face that Gibbs said he would have some.

"I've some fresh coffee too," she said, a touch of sophistication in her voice, as if coffee here were unusual and exotic also.

"I've had my coffee," he said. "Just the jello, thank you."

"Does Spyro always serve you coffee?" she said, her bitterness returning now against her will as they stood in the kitchen.

"I don't know," he said belligerently.

"But I thought you saw him every evening," she feigned sweet casualness.

"I never notice what he serves," Spence said loudly and indifferently.

"Would you like a large dish or a small dish of jello?" she said heavily.

"Small, for Christ's sake," he told her.

"Gibbs!" she cried. Then, catching herself, she said, "Small it will be, dear."

"What have you got to say that you can't bring it out!" he suddenly turned on her, and taking the dish of jello from her hand he put it down with a bang on the oilcloth covering of the tiny kitchen table.

"Gibbs, let's not have any trouble. Mother has a terrible headache tonight."

"Well, why don't you go to bed then," he said in his stentorian voice.

"Perhaps I will," she said weakly. She sat down and began eating right out of the jello bowl. She ate nearly all the rubbery stiff red imitation strawberry jello and drank in hurried gulps the coffee loaded with condensed milk.

"SPENCE gave me hell all evening," she said eating. "He thinks I would be happier if I found a fellow!"

She laughed but her laughter brought no response from Gibbs.

"I know I have nothing to offer anybody. Let's face it."

"Why do you have to say *let's face it?*" Gibbs snapped at her.

"Is there something wrong grammatically with it?" she wondered taking her spoon out of her mouth.

"Every dumb son of a bitch in the world is always saying *let's face it.*"

"And your own language is quite refined," she countered.

"Yes, let's face it, it is," he said, a bit weakly, and he took out the harmonica from his pocket, looked at it, and put it down noiselessly on the oilcloth.

"I've always wanted to do right by you, Gibbs. Since you was a little boy, I have tried. But no father around, and all. . ."

"Mom, we've been over this ten thousand times. Can't we just forget I didn't have an old man, and you worked like a team of dogs to make up for everything?"

"Yes, let's do. Let's forget it all. For heaven's sake, I'm eating all this jello," she said gaily.

"Yes, I noticed," he said.

"But I want to do for you," she told him suddenly again with passion, forgetting everything but her one feeling now, and she put out her hand to him. "You're all I have, Gibbs."

He stared at her. She was weeping.

"I've never been able to do anything for you," she said. "I know I'm not someone you want to bring your friends home to see."

"Mom, for Christ's sake," he said.

"Don't swear," she said. "I may not know grammar or English, but I'm not profane and I never taught you to be. So there," she said, and she brought out her handkerchief and wiped her eyes, making them, he saw, even older and more worn with the rubbing.

"Mom," he said, picking up the harmonica again, "I don't *have* any friends."

"No?" she said laughing a little. Then understanding his remark more clearly as her weeping calmed itself, she said, commanding again, "What do you mean now by that?"

"Just what I said, Mom. I don't have any friends. Except maybe Spyro."

"Oh that Greek boy. We would come back to him."

"How could I have friends, do you think. After all. . . ."

"Don't you go to college like everybody else," she said hurriedly. "Aren't we making the attempt, Gibbs?"

"Don't get so excited. I don't care because I don't have any friends. I wasn't accusing you of anything."

"You go to college and you ought to have friends," she said. "Isn't that right?"

"Look, for Christ's sake, just going to college doesn't bring you friends. Especially a guy like me with. . . ."

"What's wrong with you," she said. "You're handsome. You're a beautiful boy."

"Mom, Je-sus."

"No wonder that Greek is painting you. You're a fine-looking boy."

"Oh it isn't that way at all," he said, bored. "Spyro has to paint somebody."

"I don't know why you don't have friends," she said. "You have everything.

Good looks, intelligence, and you can speak and act refined when you want to. . . ."

"You have to be rich at that college. And your parents have to be. . . ."

"Is that *all* then?" she said, suddenly very white and facing him.

"Mom, I didn't mean anything about you. I didn't say any of this to make you feel. . . ."

"Be quiet," she said. "Don't talk."

"Maybe we *should* talk about it, Mom."

"I can't help what happened. What was *was*, the past is the past. Whatever wrong I may have done, the circumstances of your birth, Gibbs. . . ."

"Mom, please, this isn't about you at all."

"I've stood by you, Gibbs," she hurried on as if testifying before a deaf judge. "You can never deny that." She stared at him as though she had lost her reason.

"I'd like to have seen those rich women with their fat manicured husbands do what I've done," she said now as though powerless to stop, words coming out of her mouth that she usually kept and nursed for her long nights of sleeplessness and hate.

She stood up quickly as if to leave the room.

"With no husband or father to boot in this house! I'd like to see *them* do what I did. God damn them," she said.

GIBBS waited there, pale now as she was, and somehow much smaller before her wrath.

"God damn everybody!" she cried. "God damn everybody."

She sat down and began weeping furiously.

"I can't help it if you don't have friends," she told him, quieting herself with a last supreme effort. "I can't help it at all."

"Mom," he said. He wanted to weep too, but there was something too rocklike, too bitter and immovable inside him to let the tears come loose. Often at night as he lay in his bed knowing that Merta was lying in the next room sleepless, he had wanted to get up and go to her and let them both weep together, but he could not.

"Is there anything I could do to change

things here at home for you?" she said suddenly wiping away the tears, and tensing her breast to keep more of the torrent from gathering inside herself. "Anything at all I can do, I will," she said.

"Mom," he said, and he got up and as he did so the harmonica fell to the linoleum floor.

"You dropped your little . . . toy," she said tightening her mouth.

"It's not a toy," he began. "This is," he began again. "You see, this is the kind the professionals play on the stage . . . and everywhere."

"I see," she said, struggling to keep the storm within her quiet, the storm that now if it broke might sweep everything within her away, might rage and rage until only dying itself could stop it.

"Play something on it, Gibbs darling," she said.

He wanted to ask her if she was all right.

"Play, play," she said desperately.

"What do you want me to play, Mom?" he said, deathly pale.

"Just play any number you like," she suggested.

He began then to play "How High the Moon" but his lips trembled too much.

"Keep playing," she said beating her hands with the heavy veins and the fingers without rings or embellishment.

He looked at her hands as his lips struggled to keep themselves on the tiny worn openings of the harmonica which he had described as the instrument of the professionals.

"What a funny tune," she said. "I never listened to it right before. What did you say they called it?"

"Mom," he said. "Please!"

He stretched out his hand.

"Don't now, don't," she commanded. "Just play. Keep playing."

# THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE SCHOLAR

## *Sources of the Tradition*

MOSES HADAS

SCHOLARS, like women, are deviations from the norm Man; and just as the position of women can serve as a criterion for a culture, so can the position of scholars also. Sometimes women and scholars alike are regarded as inferior if necessary; sometimes they are raised to a mystic pedestal, which may conceal an actual contempt; in what we are pleased to look upon as high cultures they are regarded as equal but different, and the difference is respected. Among the unlettered this respect for scholars is sometimes debased to reverence, and when they are on the defensive (as humanists are in an age of scientists and vice versa) scholars tend to claim a kind of reverence as their due. Various peoples at various conjunctures of their history have recognized the superiority of the scholar as an article of faith, and the superiority has even included assurance of blessedness in a future existence. For longer or shorter periods each of the two civilizations whose contacts in the Hellenistic age determined the contours of European civilization bestowed this high privilege upon the scholar, and it is not unlikely that one was influenced by the other in this regard. An examination of possible relationships here may provide an illuminating example of the process of cultural

fusion in general as it operated in the Hellenistic age.

Among Jews the prestige of scholarship has been notably high and persistent. The ignorant stood in awe of the learned, and the rich exerted themselves to find scholarly though indigent husbands for their daughters. Scholarship meant primarily study of the Talmud, and at the conclusion of each tractate, even though the subject may have been torts or testaments, there is a formula for the student to recite:

I thank thee my God and God of my Fathers that thou hast set my lot among those that sit in the house of study and hast not set my lot among those that sit at the street corners: for I rise early and they rise early, but I rise early for things of study and they rise early for things of vanity; I toil and they toil, but I toil and receive reward and they toil and do not receive reward; I hasten and they hasten, but they hasten to the pit of destruction and I hasten to life in the world to come.

Here is authoritative recognition that learning confers a special status, and it was doubtless because the conviction was thus formalized that Jews esteemed learning so highly and for so long. But the Jews were not the only people, nor even the first, to exalt learning and assign extraordinary privileges to the teacher.

The Greek teacher whom we know best is of course Socrates; a subsidiary objective in many of Plato's dialogues is to create a particular image of him. Our point of departure here is the death of Socrates as described in Plato's *Phaedo*. Critical readers may be dubious of Socrates' proofs of immortality but no reader can be unmoved by his spiritual stature and the impact of his passion. Never before in paganism had the personality and career of the teacher become so central a force in his teaching. In the

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Hellenistic age the example of Socrates became a model. Extraordinary qualities and capacities were claimed by or for a number of individual teachers in certain religious or quasi-religious groups, and not least among the Stoics. The careers of such men were often made into tracts in order to propagate their teaching; much of the biographical matter in Diogenes Laertius' later doxography derives from edifying Lives of this kind. Even the Epicureans cherished portrait statues of their founder and observed his birthday with solemn ceremony. Neo-Pythagoreans created an edifying biography of their presumed founder almost if not entirely of whole cloth.

SUCH "biographies" constituted a special genre, under the name of aretalogy, which means "a telling of virtues." The components of the word appear in the Septuagint for "proclaiming the wonders" of the Lord. The three synoptic Gospels are in effect aretalogies, for they communicate their teaching in biographical form. So, it may be, is the book of Jonah. There was a prophet named Jonah son of Amittai (II Kings 14:25) under Jeroboam II (786-746 B.C.E.) and our book of Jonah is placed beside those of the 8th-century prophets. But unlike the others it is not a series of discourses but the career of a man, and it belongs to the Hellenistic age. The satirist Lucian, himself a Syrian of the 2nd century C.E. with a romantic nostalgia for the supposed rationalism of 5th-century-B.C.E. Athens, speaks of a number of wonder-working itinerant missionaries whose marvelous careers and ultimate transfiguration he recounts, of course, with utter skepticism. Most were doubtless charlatans and impostors; one, Apollonius of Tyana, who lived in the first half of the 1st century C.E., appears to have been a truly good man.

The extant *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* was written by Philostratus at the instance of Septimius Severus' empress Julia Domna, who was of Syrian birth and interested in religious revival; it was she who reorganized the institution of Vestal Virgins. According

to the *Life*, Apollonius' career was in brief as follows. His birth, at Tyana in Cappadocia, was attended by miracles and portents. At the age of sixteen he set himself to observe the Pythagorean discipline and abstained from wine, meat, marriage, leather or woolen clothing, and shaving. At the town of Aegae he established himself in the temple of Asclepius, where his reputation for sanctity brought crowds of sick to be healed. At the death of his parents he gave the greater part of his patrimony to his elder brother and the rest to poor relations. He then observed five years of complete silence, and traveled through Asia Minor. His reputation for holiness was such that warring factions in Cilicia and Pamphylia made peace upon his appearance. He knew languages without having learned them, perceived the inmost thoughts of men, understood the speech of birds and beasts, and was able to predict the future. He was arrested by the Roman emperor but miraculously liberated. According to popular tradition he ascended bodily to heaven upon his death, and afterwards appeared to certain persons who had entertained doubts about a future life.

Apollonius differs from other personages of his kind in having a Philostratus to write his *Life*, and this illustrates the process by which popular, subliterate cults were raised to respectability. At the beginning of his book Philostratus tells us that a memoir of his hero had already been written by one of his own Oriental disciples, but that this was a crude work which needed to be recast. By putting it into elegant form Philostratus was, as it were, putting Father Divine in the *Atlantic Monthly*. It was only by such a process that the humble cults of the East could be made acceptable to the educated.

That favored teachers should win reverent esteem and an assurance of immortality is not surprising in Apollonius' age, but what of the man who is not so singled out but who merely knows his books? For this further and less probable step we also have evidence from the non-Jewish environment. A remarkable number of inscriptions and tomb

decorations of the Hellenistic age represent the deceased as a *mousikos anêr*, a protégé of the Muses, and the contexts suggest that acquaintance with the Muses, which is to say education, entitles a man to special consideration. The notion may be very old, and inspired by Orphic doctrine. Sappho, who was almost certainly connected with Orphism, has a poem addressed to "a woman of no education" which reads:

*When you are dead you will lie unremembered for evermore, for you have no part in the roses that come from Pieria [the haunt of the Muses]; nay, obscure here, you will move obscure in the house of Death, and flit to and fro among such of the dead as have no fame.*

Perhaps a more pertinent commentary on *mousikos anêr* is a line in Plutarch's *On Educating Children*: "Of all our qualities learning alone is immortal and divine." This is evidently no hyperbole. All of this fits in with and is corroborated by a new picture of how the blessed entertain themselves in the Elysian Fields. In the more familiar descriptions, as for example in the sixth *Aeneid*, the heroes amuse themselves with strenuous athletic sports. In the pseudo-Platonic *Axiochus*, which is to be dated to about the 1st century B.C.E., there are "discourses of philosophers and readings of poets and recitals of music"—all pursuits of the *mousikos anêr*.

Before Rabbinic Judaism purposefully dissociated itself from Greek attitudes we find the exalted status assigned to scholarship among the Greeks echoed in a Jewish work. Ben Sirah or Ecclesiasticus, written in Hebrew in Palestine at the beginning of the 2nd century B.C.E. and translated into Greek in Alexandria toward the middle of the century, contains a section on the various occupations of men (38:24-39:11). The passage starts with a picturesque and detailed description of the work of the ploughman, the carpenter, the graver, the smith, and the potter, and praises their skill and usefulness. "Without these cannot a city be inhabited; and they shall not dwell where they will nor go up and down. . . . They will maintain the

state of the world." But the scholar seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients and searches out the secrets of grave sentences. "Many shall commend his understanding; and so long as the world endureth it shall not be blotted out; his memorial shall not depart away, and his name shall live from generation to generation. Nations shall show forth his wisdom and the congregation shall declare his praise."

For our present purposes Ben Sirah is a particularly useful witness, for he wrote long before the barrier between tradition and humanism was erected and when tradition could freely adopt attractive aspects of humanism without a sense that it was thereby compromising its own values. And having itself become a part of the tradition, the conviction of the durability of the scholar's work and reputation could be elaborated to include personal immortality when (probably also through Greek influence) beliefs in personal immortality came to be crystallized.

Actually there is no reason why Greeks and Jews should not have independently developed similar attitudes on these and kindred matters. Each group was seeking to protect itself against the danger of absorption by cultivating its canonical or quasi-canonical literature, and it was natural for the guardians of the literatures to receive special status. The first thing any handful of Greeks did upon settling anywhere in the Hellenistic world was to establish a *gymnasium* where the *ancient* classics—Homer and tragedy and Plato—were taught; it was this sharing of a common cultural heritage that enabled the scattered minority of Greeks to maintain their unity and identity. The remoter they were from older settlements the more determined were the Greeks to maintain their Greekhood; intermarriage was common in the older settlements but avoided where cultural survival was precarious. *Gymnasium* training was prerequisite to any position of authority in the community, and therefore a privilege highly prized by upper-class natives; that is why humanist ideas spread so rapidly among the upper classes

in the East. The parallel to the establishment of Talmud Torahs in new Jewish settlements, ancient or modern, is inescapable.

In the Hellenistic experience the Greek diaspora came before the Jewish diaspora, and it is natural to assume that the one learned from the other. It is of course entirely possible that each hit upon the one correct response to the same challenge independently, and we should believe that that was the case if a barrier had been fixed between the two; but until the end of the 1st century C.E. cultural interchange was easy and natural. Hence, even if influence was present it was not simply as between donor and recipient but rather, as in other aspects of cultural interchange, reciprocal. In analogous areas it can be demonstrated that the usual course was for the East to accept some novelty and then return it to the West with altered or enhanced significance.

So long as the Jewish state was in being, Greek modes could be accepted without endangering survival. It was only when the

extinction of the state made loyalty to religious tradition the sole means of survival that Greek modes were abjured, in order to insure the integrity of the tradition. But the core that was thus protected already contained a considerable Greek ingredient, and though cultural interchange was discountenanced it could not in the nature of the case cease. If the Septuagint had become suspect because it was exploited by Christians, a Greek version of Scripture was nevertheless indispensable, and Aquila produced one less susceptible to abuse. Pietists cannot surround their conventicles with walls high and thick enough to insulate them from the dominant environment; indeed the very thickness of the walls, and the earlocks and broad black hats which proclaim their denizens' exclusiveness, are plain evidence of the effectiveness of the environment. But the majority, in antiquity as today, did not wear earlocks; the view that the walls had always been and must always continue to be impermeable is a creation of those who did.

# CEDARS OF LEBANON

## CHRISTIAN TRAVELER IN THE HOLY LAND

*Selections from a 19th-Century Journal*

JOHN LLOYD STEPHENS

IN AN earlier number (February 1957), in this department, we set forth some fascinating entries from a journal kept by Herman Melville on a pilgrimage which he made to the Holy Land in 1857. Now, we offer an excerpt from the writings of a less famous traveler of the mid-19th century who journeyed to Palestine, among other places. JOHN LLOYD STEPHENS was a graduate of Columbia College, and in 1834 a rising young New York lawyer and Tammany politician. But when a persistent throat infection failed to clear up, his doctors prescribed a trip abroad. The editor of the *American Monthly Review*, a friend of his, published a long letter from Stephens describing his travels through the Levant, from Athens to Smyrna; Stephens was thus embarked on a new career as a writer of travel books, and subsequently as an archaeologist, through his discoveries of the Lost Mayan cities in Central America.

The selections below are taken from the first of Stephens's books, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land* (Harper and Brothers, 1837, Vol. II), which ran into many editions, both in England and America, and was still being reprinted in 1886. Among its enthusiastic readers in this country were Edgar Allan Poe, who reviewed it for the *New York Review*, and Rebecca Gratz, whose well-known letters make frequent reference to points of information she was picking up from her reading of Stephens. Only three years after the book was published, the Jews of America acted, for the first time, as a unit in the Damascus affair; it is not unlikely that Stephens's book may have contributed to their new sense of community by making available to American Jews a vivid picture of the disabilities of the Jews of Palestine and the Near East under Turkish rule.—JOSEPH L. BLAU

I HAD no wish to stop at Hebron, though the first city in the Holy Land, and hallowed by high and holy associations. The glory of the house of David had forever departed. I was anxious to put an outpost between myself and the desert. . . . But the governor positively refused to let me go that afternoon; he said that it was a bad road, and that a Jew had been robbed a few days before on his way to Bethlehem; and again lying down, he silenced all objections with the eternal but hateful word, "Bokhara, bokhara," tomorrow, tomorrow. Seeing there was no help for me, I made the best of it, and asked him to furnish me with a place to lodge in that night. He immediately gave orders to the janizary. . . .

I followed the janizary, who conducted me around outside the walls and through

the burying-ground, where the women were scattered in groups among the tombs, to a distant and separate quarter of the city. I had no idea where he was taking me; but I had not advanced a horse's length in the narrow streets, before their peculiar costume and physiognomies told me that I was among the unhappy remnant of a fallen people, the persecuted and despised Israelites. They were removed from the Turkish quarter, as if the slightest contact with this once favored people would contaminate the bigoted follower of the Prophet. The governor, in the haughty spirit of a Turk, probably thought that the house of a Jew was a fit place for the repose of a Christian; and following the janizary through a low range of narrow, dark, and filthy lanes, mountings and turnings, of which it is impossible to give any

idea, with the whole Jewish population turning out to review us, and the sheik and all his attendants with their long swords clattering at my heels, I was conducted to the house of the chief rabbi of Hebron.

If I had my choice, these were the very persons I would have selected for my first acquaintances in the Holy Land. The descendants of Israel were fit persons to welcome a stranger to the ancient city of their fathers; and if they had been then sitting under the shadow of the throne of David, they could not have given me a warmer reception. It may be that, standing in the same relation to the Turks, alike the victims of persecution and contempt, they forgot the great cause which had torn us apart and made us a separate people, and felt only a sympathy for the object of mutual oppression. But whatever was the cause, I shall never forget the kindness with which, as a stranger and Christian, I was received by the Jews in the capital of their ancient kingdom. . . .

I had seen enough of the desert, and of the wild spirit of freedom which men talk of without knowing, to make me cling more fondly than ever even to the lowest grade of civilization. . . . Judge, then, of my satisfaction at being welcomed from the desert by the friendly and hospitable Israelites. . . . My speculating, scheming friends and fellow-citizens would have smiled to see me that night, with a Syrian dress and long beard, sitting crosslegged on a divan, with the chief rabbi of the Jews at Hebron, and half the synagogue around us, talking of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as of old and mutual friends. . . .

\* \* \*

Giving a last look to the Valley of the Shepherds, we were soon on the mountain's side; and very soon, all the interest with which I had regarded Bethlehem was lost in the more absorbing feeling with which I looked forward to Jerusalem. . . . We were soon approaching the walls of Jerusalem, and seemed to be almost at their foot; but we were on one of the mountains that encompass the city, and the deep Valley of Jehosaphat was yet between us and the holy city—the sacred burying-place of the Jews, the “gathering-place of nations.” Crossing this valley, we ascended on the other side, and

in a few moments were on one of the seven hills on which the city is built, and entering at the Bethlehem gate. It was guarded by a Turkish soldier, and half a dozen more lay basking in the sun outside, who raised their heads as I approached, their long mustaches curling as they looked at me; and, though they gave me no greeting, they let me pass without any molestation. . . .

The reader may remember the kindness with which I had been received by the chief rabbi at Hebron. His kindness did not end there; a few days after my arrival, the chief rabbi of Jerusalem, the high-priest of the Jews in the city of their ancient kings, called upon me, accompanied by a Gibraltar Jew who spoke English, and who told me that they had come at the request of my friend in Hebron, to receive and welcome me in the city of their fathers. I had already seen a great deal of the Jews. I had seen them in the cities of Italy, everywhere more or less oppressed; at Rome, shut up every night in their miserable quarters as if they were noxious beasts; in Turkey, persecuted and oppressed; along the shores of the Black Sea and in the heart of Russia, looked down upon by the serfs of that great empire of vassalage; and, for the climax of misery, I had seen them condemned and spit upon, even by the ignorant and enslaved boors of Poland. I had seen them scattered abroad among all nations, as it had been foretold they would be, everywhere a separate and peculiar people; and everywhere, under all poverty, wretchedness, and oppression, waiting for, and anxiously expecting, the coming of a Messiah, to call together their scattered tribes, and restore them to the kingdom of their fathers; and all this the better fitted me for the more interesting spectacle of the Jews in the holy city. In all changes and revolutions, from the day when the kingdom of Solomon passed into the hands of strangers, under the Assyrian, the Roman, the Arab, and the Turk, a remnant of that once-favoured people has always hovered around the holy city; and now, as in the days of David, old men may be seen at the foot of Mount Zion, teaching their children to read from that mysterious book, on which they have ever fondly built their hopes of a temporal and eternal kingdom.

The friends made for me by the rabbi at Hebron were the very friends above all

others whom I would have selected for myself. While the Christians were preparing for the religious ceremonies of Easter, the Jews were making ready for the great feast of the Passover; and one of the first offers of kindness they made me, was an invitation to wait and partake of it with them. The rabbi was an old man, nearly seventy, with a long white beard, and Aaron himself need not have been ashamed of such a representative. I would have preferred to attach myself particularly to him; but, as I could speak neither Arabic nor Hebrew, and the English Jew was not willing to play second, and serve merely as interpreter, I had but little benefit of the old man's society.

The Jews are the best topographers in Jerusalem. . . . That same morning they took me to what they called a part of the wall of Solomon's temple. It forms part of the southern wall of the mosque of Omar, and is evidently older than the rest, the stones being much larger, measuring nine or ten feet long; and I saw that day, as other travellers may still see every Friday in the year, all the Jews in Jerusalem clothed in their best raiment, winding through the narrow streets of their quarter; and under this hallowed wall, with the sacred volume in their hands, singing, in the language in which they were written, the Songs of Solomon and the Psalms of David. White-bearded old men and smooth-cheeked boys were leaning over the same book; and Jewish maidens, in their long white robes, were standing with their faces against the wall, and praying through its cracks and crevices. The tradition which leads them to pray *through* this wall is, that during the building of the temple a cloud rested over it so as to prevent any entrance; and Solomon stood at the door, and prayed that the cloud might be removed, and promised that the temple should be always open to men of every nation desiring to offer up prayers; whereupon the Lord removed the cloud, and promised that the prayers of all people offered up in that place should find acceptance in his sight; and now, as the Mussulman lords it over the place where the temple stood, and the Jews are not permitted to enter, they endeavour to insinuate their prayers through the crevices in the wall, that thus they may rise from the interior to the Throne of Grace. The tradition is

characteristic, and serves to illustrate the devoted constancy with which the Israelites adhere to the externals of their faith. . . .

\* \* \*

About nine o'clock the next morning . . . we were sitting in the highest seats in the synagogue, at the foot of Mount Zion. My old friend the rabbi was in the desk, reading to a small remnant of the Israelites the same law which had been read to their fathers on the same spot ever since they came up out of the land of Egypt. And there they sat, where their fathers had sat before them—with high, black, square-topped caps, with shawls wound around, crossed in front, and laid very neatly; long gowns fastened with a sash, and long beards, the feeble remnant of a mighty people; there was sternness in their faces, but in their hearts a spirit of patient endurance, and a firm and settled resolution to die and be buried under the shadow of their fallen temple.

By the Jewish law the men and women sit apart in the synagogues; and as I could not understand the words of exhortation which fell from the lips of the preacher, it was not altogether unnatural that I should turn from the rough-bearded sons of Abraham to the smooth faces of their wives and daughters. Since I left Europe, I had not been in an apartment where the women sat with their faces uncovered; and, under these circumstances, it is not surprising that I saw many a dark-eyed Jewess who appeared well worthy of my gaze; and it is not a vain boast to say, that while singing the Songs of Solomon, many a Hebrew maiden turned her bright black orbs on me; for, in the first place, on entering we had disturbed more than a hundred sitting on the steps; secondly, my original dress, half Turk, half Frank, attracted the eyes even of the men; and, thirdly, the alleged universal failing of the sex is not wanting among the daughters of Judah.

The service over, we stopped a moment to look at the synagogue, which was a new building, with nothing about it that was peculiar or interesting. It had no gold or silver ornaments; and the sacred scroll, the table of the Law, contained in the holy of holies, was all that the pride of the Jew could show. . . .

It was Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. The command to do no work on the Sabbath day is observed by every Jew, as strictly as when the commandment was given to his fathers; and to such an extent was it obeyed in the house of my friend, that it was not considered allowable to extinguish a lamp which had been lighted the night before, and was now burning in broad daylight over our table. This extremely strict observance of the law at first gave me some uneasiness about my dinner; but my host, with great self-complacency, relieved me from all apprehensions, by describing the admirable contrivance he had invented for reconciling appetite and duty—an oven, heated the night before, to such a degree that the process of cooking was continued during the night, and the dishes were ready when wanted the next day. I must not forget the Jew's family, which consisted of a second wife, about sixteen, already the mother of two children, and his son and

son's wife, the husband twelve, and the wife ten years old. The little gentleman was at the table, and behaved very well, except that his father had to check him in eating sweetmeats. The lady was playing on the floor with other children, and I did with her what I could not have done with a bigger man's wife—I took her on my knee, and kissed her. Among the Jews, matches are made by the parents; and immediately upon the marriage, the wife is brought into the household of the husband. A young gentleman was tumbling about the floor, who was engaged to the daughter of the chief rabbi. I did not ask the age of the lady, of course; but the gentleman bore the heavy burden of three years. He had not yet learned to whisper the story of his love to his blushing mistress, for, in fact, he could not talk at all; he was a great bawling boy, and cared much more for his bread and butter than a wife; but his prudent father had already provided. . . .

# ON THE HORIZON

## S. N. BEHRMAN COMES HOME

*"The Worcester Account" on Broadway*

GERALD WEALES

**M**OST American playwrights are fitted out with identification labels early in their careers. A conventional tag makes easy the reaction of the reviewers and the public to any play that a man writes. Whether it is to be praised or damned, it is convenient to be able to say that it is or is not typical Anderson, Hellman, Odets, Williams. It is considered proper to say of S. N. Behrman that he is America's chief practitioner of high comedy; that he is, as Brooks Atkinson says incredibly in his review of *The Cold Wind and the Warm*, "the Congreve of American letters."

Nothing that Behrman has written remotely resembles Congreve and, with the possible exception of *Jane* (1952), an adaptation of a Somerset Maugham story, no Behrman play since his first two (*The Second Man* and *Serena Blandish*), since 1929 in fact, can be called high comedy. In high comedy, if it is a definable genre, manners and morals are examined, lightly or biting, with conversation—witty, the playwright hopes—as the chief tool; the tradition in modern drama is mainly English, passing, with increasing rapidity, from Wilde to Maugham to Noel Coward. Behrman has been concerned not so much with manners and morals as with ideas, political and social,

and with the interplay of man's intellect and emotions. If he is to be compared to any English playwright, it should be to Bernard Shaw in genre, if not in quality.

Yet Behrman has never been seriously considered as a comedian of ideas. One reason may be that he sets his plays in drawing rooms. His drama moves in that international half-world in which art and intellect meet money, in which celebrity, notoriety, or wealth is a necessary entree. Invariably, the dramatic situation against which the conflict of ideas is played is one that involves the discovery or dissolution of love, and there is always a central female character, who could be and often was played by Ina Claire. When an elegantly dressed play, with articulate and often amusing lines, is centered on a character who is played by an extremely sophisticated actress, it is not surprising that substance is ignored for surface.

There is another, and probably more important, reason why the ideas in Behrman's plays have been passed over. The bulk of his plays were written in the 30's and his objectivity, if taken seriously, would have been completely unacceptable in that decade. Basically conservative, Behrman stood on middle ground, trying to hold on to the area, once staked out by humanists, in which tolerance of ideas and of human weakness could flourish. His plays show a fascination and a distaste for the man who becomes completely absorbed in himself or his beliefs—the complete egoist or the convinced idealist. There are indications, such as the Author's Note to *Wine of Choice* (1938), that Behrman shared the general longing for a

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GERALD WEALES teaches English at the University of Pennsylvania and contributes to the *Reporter*, *Commonweal*, *Atlantic*, the *American Scholar* and other magazines. Articles by him on the plays of Clifford Odets and Paddy Chayefsky have previously appeared in *COMMENTARY*. Mr. Weales reviewed *The Best American Plays* in our October 1958 issue.

world in which a man might awake and sing, but he has never been convinced that the new world is coming, and he has always been suspicious of those who know precisely how to achieve it. From Richard Kurt in *Biography* (1932) to Chris, identified as a Communist, in *Wine of Choice*, Behrman has sprinkled his plays with radicals whom he distrusts because of "that extraordinary, humorless intensity characteristic of saints and fanatics" that he identifies with Emma Goldman in his *New Yorker* series, *The Worcester Account*. He dissects with equal lucidity the dreamers of the right, from Raphael Lord in *Meteor* (1925) to Clay Rainier in *Dunnigan's Daughter* (1945). Behrman was, however, forced by outside events in the 30's to admit that the tolerant man must finally face commitment; in the note to *Wine of Choice*, he wrote: "If there is any crusade possible for the rest of us, it is a defensive one of no quarter to those who will, if they can, force their totalitarian creeds down our throats." In *Rain from Heaven* (1934), for all the English country house setting, Behrman wrote an anti-Nazi play, while leftist playwrights were still preoccupied with domestic problems and pacifism; *Odets's Till the Day I Die*, one of the early anti-Nazi plays from the left, did not come until the next year.

By insisting on the general character of Behrman's plays, I do not want to imply that he is a major playwright. Too often his characters do not seem to have ideas; the ideas have characters. The connection between the personal insecurity and the fascist politics of Hobart Eldridge in *Rain from Heaven* exists more obviously in the mind of the playwright than it does on the stage. At his worst, in plays like *Meteor* or *Wine of Choice*, Behrman can be distressingly hortatory, building his ideational conflict on the sands of artificiality. At his best, in plays like *Biography* and *The Second Man*, the ideas manage a real relevance to the dramatic situation and the characters. If Behrman has failed to make the comedy of ideas, that very European plant, grow luxuriously in American soil, he has at least produced a body of work in which the ideas remain alive and interesting, when so much of the drama of the 30's has become merely naive. The explanation for this, perhaps, is that Behrman is preoccupied with under-

standing life in terms of ideas, and at the same time he is pragmatic, matter of fact, very much a part of the commercial theater. The Broadway playwright tempered the intellectual, but the intellectual regularly insisted—drawing room or not—that the plays deal with serious matters. This may be why he has never written a really fine play; it may also be the reason so many of his plays still seem to be good ones.

IF THE stereotype, "a Behrman play," made it difficult to consider Behrman as a playwright of ideas, how much more unlikely it would have been to consider him as a Jewish writer. A Jew, yes, and a writer, certainly; but until the first of the memory pieces that eventually became *The Worcester Account* appeared in the *New Yorker* in 1946, it was highly unlikely that anyone would have connected the two identifications. It was as though Behrman, born into an Orthodox Jewish home, broke completely with his past when he left Providence Street in Worcester for Harvard and New York City. Actually, *The Worcester Account* is full of evidence that, in some ways, Behrman remained the Providence Street boy in the years of his Broadway success. But artistically there was a break. The world of Behrman's plays was as removed as possible from the one that he grew up in. There are personal reasons for this, of course. *The Worcester Account* testifies to how strange his father's world, bounded by the Talmud and the Jewish tradition of suffering, was to a boy growing up in an American town, discovering the delights of skepticism and the American materialistic dream that he found in Horatio Alger's books.

The only identifiable Jew in the early Behrman plays is Sigmund Traub, the diamond merchant, in *Serena Blandish* (1929). The play is an adaptation of a grotesque novel by Enid Bagnold in which the innocent, compliant Serena illustrates "The Difficulty of Getting Married" (the subtitle of both play and novel) in a society in which elegant viciousness is the prevailing quality. In Miss Bagnold's novel, the diamond merchant is just an incident in the chronicle of Serena's inability to achieve "success" in the way that Countess Flor di Folio and her circle understand the word. Behrman turns the jeweler into an important character, gives

him a name, and endows him with a Viennese-opera sentimentality and a contrasting practicality ("the impulse to bargain is deeper than the impulse of generosity"), twin stereotypes that might seem appropriate in that early expatriate from Jewishness, Arthur Wing Pinero. Behrman also provides the Countess with casual anti-Semitism: "I wager he capitalizes her in some way. Those Jews make money out of everything." Yet, in the long run, although Traub is gentler to Serena than the rest of the Countess's circle, even asks her to marry him, he is ranged with them, a gallery of bizarre figures, against whom Serena's honest innocence and girlish romanticism seem a healthy and condemning contrast.

*Serena Blandish*, perhaps because it is an adaptation, is in many ways an atypical Behrman play. After it, Behrman concentrated on the international intelligentsia and the clash of ideas. Achievement or, more often in Behrman's plays, the reputation for achievement was the card of admission to the society of his plays; being a Jew or not seemed irrelevant. By 1934, the irrelevant had become distressingly relevant. In a Prefatory Note to *Rain from Heaven*, Behrman explains that the play grew out of an incident that had been described to him by a friend—Gerhart Hauptmann's rejection of the drama critic, Alfred Kerr (who, by 1934, was a refugee in this country), one of the playwright's most devoted supporters, because Kerr "did not measure up to the new standardization." By the time the play was written, the incident had become no more than an echo in the action.

The play itself is the story of Hugo Willens, a German with a Jewish grandmother, a Jew only by Nazi definition, and his recognition that there are times when the most tolerant of men must draw the line of acceptance. One of Behrman's uncommitted humanists, Willens, had been sent to a concentration camp for writing a satirical pamphlet called "The Last Jew." In the play Willens, now free and in England, slips into his natural complacency, until an anti-Semitic outburst from an old American friend forces him to his decision. "I see now that goodness is not enough, that kindness is not enough, that liberalism is not enough. I'm sick of evasions. They've done us in. Civilization, charity, progress, tolerance—all

the catchwords. I'm sick of them. We'll have to redefine our terms." After his speech, Hugo leaves, presumably to work in the anti-Nazi underground.

Hugo's final declaration can be accepted simply as a commitment against Nazism, one that might have been made by a Gentile; his father, after all, was a Protestant clergyman. The play, however, makes clear that his final act is the acceptance of Jewishness, a fighting for as well as a fighting against. This is made apparent in the contrasting figure of Sascha Barashaev, an American piano player, who feels it necessary to hide the fact that he is Jewish. It is made more apparent in the immediate cause of Hugo's decision. Rand Eldridge, an Antarctic explorer and a clean-living, pink-cheeked Boy Scout type, an old skiing friend of Hugo's from happier days, driven by jealousy, pulls out of himself a buried epithet: "You dirty Jew!" Hugo is in many ways a standard portrait of the good man forced into action, the anti-Nazi hero, professorial ordinarily, who was to turn up with increasing frequency on the American stage and screen. In his understanding of Rand, Behrman shows most clearly the heritage of Worcester; it is inconceivable that a Jewish boy growing up there could have avoided a variation on Rand.

AS THOUGH, having made his declaration, he felt the need to stand away from it, Behrman turned back to a consideration of those terms that Hugo had been forced by events to redefine—the great generalizations—goodness, kindness, liberalism, civilization, charity, tolerance. In *End of Summer* (1936) he embodied them in Leonie Frothingham, who is so ineffectual that she is easily devoured by the strong and the self-sufficient. In *Wine of Choice* his hero takes a stand for these qualities, even when they are weak to foolishness, against the Communist who would sacrifice them for his special vision. *Wine of Choice* contains the only two identifiable Jewish characters to appear in a Behrman play between *Rain from Heaven* and his adaptation of Franz Werfel's *Jacobowsky and the Colonel* (1944).

Although the main point of *Wine of Choice* is clear enough—the rededication to a world in which one can taste the wine of choice, even if the after-effects are unhappy—the play itself and the use of the Jewish

characters is somewhat confused. The least important of the two, Leo Traub, the movie director, is another of Behrman's spoiled artists, one of a gallery of expendables in the eyes of the play's Communist. The other Jew, Binkie Niebuhr, is an acid androgyne, modeled to some extent on Alexander Woollcott, who played the role. He is a fussy, interfering man who tries to arrange everyone's life to fit some vague pattern; "the Shadchen de Luxe," Traub calls him. His Jewishness is apparent only in occasional lines, such as that of Traub's, which Behrman cautiously translates in the next line, and in a story about a pogrom long ago in Niebuhr's Lithuanian village. The anecdote is used to illustrate that Binkie has moved not only years from the poverty of his Lithuanian and his Jewish youth, but also years from humanity, and that he, in his officious busyness, is a complement to the Communist—a man divorcing himself from human compassion—although in this case the divorce is for trivial, personal reasons, without even the benefit of Chris's revolutionary dream. If this evaluation is correct, then Binkie is, by inversion, reaffirming Hugo's self-definition. There is, however, a certain ambiguity in the presentation of Binkie; he is on the side of the hero. If this last fact is any more than the accident of personal need, then Binkie, as a Jew, is a mystery.

IN BEHRMAN'S version of *Jacobowsky and the Colonel*, the Jewish refugee becomes the embodiment of all the civilized virtues which Hugo, to defend, would discard. Jacobowsky's only defense is patience and wry humor: "There are two things a man shouldn't be angry at—what he can help and what he can't help." His wild, sometimes slapstick escape with the anti-Semitic Polish aristocrat becomes, as the Pole finally succumbs to the Jew ("Jacobowsky child, I adopt you!"), not only the triumph of one gentle man over one violent man, but the triumph of all that Jacobowsky represents over all that the Colonel implies. At the end of the play, the British officer makes room for Jacobowsky on the submarine: "I'm not convinced by your arguments, Colonel, but by his tenacity for life." In Behrman's hands, Werfel's play becomes a fable in which the Jew, as outcast and refugee, sustained by a tradition of suffering ("I wept when I was

born and every day shows me why"), is joined in Jacobowsky by the liberal humanist to form a single comic archetype. Comic because he triumphs, or triumphant because he is comic. Behrman says in the Forward to the play, of Werfel, not of Jacobowsky, "Perhaps humor is the salt of survival. . . ."

Werfel's Jacobowsky, judging by Gustave O. Arlt's translation of the play,\* is not the endlessly gentle, eternally lovable little man whom Behrman depicts. He is not a persistent sea of tolerance in which the Colonel at last drowns. He is an active antagonist, as much a hater as the Colonel is. In Behrman's play, Jacobowsky reluctantly parts with the Colonel's party because his papers have been taken away and, then, discovering that the Colonel has left behind the documents he is to take to England, he sets out to find them, knowing that he risks his chance of escape. In Werfel's version, Jacobowsky parts with the Colonel because he cannot stand being with him any longer, will not shake his hand when they separate, and only meets him again by accident. The Colonel's anti-Semitism is obvious, but implicit in Behrman; in Werfel, it is explicit. Jacobowsky's speech about every man's guilt in the Nazi crimes against the Jews, which is an important part of the argument with the Colonel in Werfel's second act, is given, in Behrman, to the anonymous French gentleman, a kind of personified conscience. Werfel's picture of the relationship between Jacobowsky and the Colonel is probably more realistic than Behrman's; the anger of his Jacobowsky is somehow more fitting than the tolerance of Behrman's. Yet Behrman's changes do not simply meet the politic requirements of Broadway production. His conception of Jacobowsky, which transforms Werfel's bitter comedy into a humanistic fairy tale, is obviously the product of a mind that wants to identify the Jew with all the virtues and values that that playwright has so often celebrated in his earlier plays.†

\*Published by Viking in 1944, the year in which Behrman's version was acted and published by Random House.

†The recent movie version of *Jacobowsky*, for which Behrman, as one of the script writers, must accept part of the blame, is a vulgarization of his play. The general conception of Jacobowsky is retained, but the farcical action—and there is much more of it—seems extraneous where once it seemed integral.

Two years after *Jacobowsky*, the war over, the first of the Worcester reminiscences appeared in the *New Yorker*. I doubt if Behrman could say why he turned back to his childhood and adolescence. Any number of guesses are likely and all of them are probably correct. For one thing, the literary fashion in the postwar years put a premium on memory pieces; the *New Yorker*, which had begun innocently with H. L. Mencken's Baltimore reminiscences before the war, suddenly became nostalgia rampant as every novelist, poet, and humorist in sight turned his imagination and his typewriter to his childhood. For another thing, Behrman was past fifty, and ready to review his origins. For still another, the postwar years saw an increasing interest, among Jews and non-Jews alike, in the American Jew as a distinctive yet integral part of American culture (witness: COMMENTARY). I prefer to think that the plays I have cited show evidence of Behrman's growing recognition that a man's identity as a Jew is as important as his identity as a music critic or as an American; under the pressure of that recognition, he turned his attention to Worcester, hoping to find there the line that led from his tenement home to Broadway eminence.

THE WORCESTER ACCOUNT is quite unlike the bulk of reminiscence writing. Part essay and part story, each of the pieces in *The Worcester Account* examines an incident or a complex of incidents and extracts from it some general perception, perhaps dimly seen in childhood, by which Behrman has come to understand some universal emotion—loneliness, desire, fear, longing for the infinite, social insecurity. These are not nostalgic evocations, the lyric re-animation of the past, such as we get in Alfred Kazin's *The Walker in the City*; nor are they the pointless anecdotalism of so many remembering writers: the day I got my first watch. These are intellectual constructions, the prowling examinations of a man who is not so intent on getting back to his roots as he is on realizing that he has grown from them.

In *The Cold Wind and the Warm* Behr-

man has tried to use the material of *The Worcester Account* on stage. He has failed to make a play of the book, which was, after all, primarily contemplative. On stage many of the people who appear in the reminiscences—even the fabulous Aunt Ida—have become stereotypes. So much that was expository in the book, descriptions and complicated, intuitive examinations of states of mind, now comes incredibly from the mouths of characters who could not have spoken such lines. The youthful Tobey may have had the youthful Behrman's fantasy about holding on to the bedposts to save himself from the Angel of Death, but it is unlikely that he would have blurted it so widely around the neighborhood.

The play's chief difficulty is that it does not know whether or not it wants to be a frankly nostalgic play about the growing up of Tobey; whether it wants to explore the strange mind of Willie Lavin, the mystery in *The Worcester Account* that has to be explained limply in the play; or whether it is to be an unlikely triangle play involving Willie and his two girls, the attainable and the unattainable. *The Cold Wind and the Warm* is interesting as an attempt to render *The Worcester Account* in another form, but the book, really, was the end of Behrman's return to Worcester.

S. N. Behrman came home, but not to escape the world, as many writers of reminiscence seem to want to do. He brought with him all that he had learned as a student, a playwright, a man in the large world, and found, when he turned his experience loose on his childhood, that he had carried away with him, when he left Worcester, the embryo of much of what was to grow into knowledge. As a boy he used to contemplate the wonder of streets connecting to streets, of Providence Street meeting another street and another and another until, if he followed them, he would be led from Worcester to the ends of the world. He was. But in *The Worcester Account* he came to know that "There is only one street, indivisible as the sea, which touches every shore. The horizon widens, the horizon contracts. It remains the same."

# LETTERS FROM READERS

## Jews and the Census

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

There is an unconscious irony in your publication of Erich Rosenthal's quite competent article on the Jewish population of the United States ("Five Million American Jews," December 1958). He begins with the data on religious groups that were recently revealed in the Census Bureau's 1957 sample survey, but he does not tell his readers that Jewish community relations agencies, including the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, and the American Jewish Congress, were most vocal in their hostility to the question on religious belief. In fact, so effective was their opposition that the Census Bureau now has been directed to cease all further attempts at eliciting any information regarding religious identification, so that when Jewish communities want to determine the growth, or decline, of their population they will have to find out for themselves.

As one of those pioneer Jewish demographers to whom Mr. Rosenthal refers, I found the opposition of the agencies to the Census Bureau's careful efforts based on rather specious legal grounds (the attorneys pursuing the matter unfurled the principle of Church-State separation with great alacrity) and endowed with more heat than logic. The scientific needs of the population expert, social scientist, and community worker were brushed to one side. What makes the entire incident even more ironic is the adherence in 1949 of these same organizations to the plea of the Conference on Jewish Demography for the inclusion of a question on religious affiliation in the work of the Census Bureau.

BEN B. SELIGMAN

Washington, D.C.

[Edwin J. Lukas, director of the Department of National Affairs of the American Jewish Committee, was invited to comment on Mr. Seligman's letter.—Ed.]

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The American Jewish Committee, as well as other Jewish agencies—and also many Protestant bodies—did indeed oppose the inclusion of the question, "What is your religion?" in

the next decennial census. We were by no means unmindful of the undoubted benefits that might accrue to social scientists and others if accurate answers to that question were obtained. But we were keenly aware, as Mr. Seligman apparently is not, that while it is constitutionally permissible for government to inquire about our habits in possessing radios, refrigerators, and automobiles (data useful to the Department of Commerce), it is constitutionally estopped from invading the sacred area of conscience. We felt that the inclusion of the religion question would introduce a precedent that might prove damaging to a unique American tradition which places a man's religious beliefs, or the lack of them, beyond the competence of the civil authority to inquire into, however useful the information might prove to demographers. It is regrettable that Mr. Seligman sees fit to treat the Church-State separation principle in such cavalier fashion.

Moreover, Mr. Seligman's facts are not quite right. The Conference on Jewish Demography never advocated the inclusion of a question on religious affiliation in the census conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. In a letter to the *National Jewish Post*, dated April 24, 1950, Dr. Salo W. Baron, who was then chairman of the Conference, wrote: "... I can say without hesitation that we have never considered the matter of religious question in the Federal census as within our purview and have never carried on any kind of activity in this direction. As a matter of fact, I suspect that if the views of our member agencies were polled on this issue a number of them would be strongly against such a question." The concern of the Conference was with the adequacy of the data obtained by the religious bodies themselves, as part of the U.S. Census of Religious Bodies (which has since been discontinued). Its principal preoccupation—and this is the crucial point—was with the development of plans under Jewish auspices for securing better data on the U.S. Jewish population. The best evidence of this was the establishment by the Conference of an Office for Jewish Population Research, of which—mark you!—Mr. Seligman was for a time executive secretary.

EDWIN J. LUKAS

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have read with interest Erich Rosenthal's article "Five Million American Jews."

I should like to call to the attention of your readers that Mr. Rosenthal's reference to immigration of Egyptian Jews ["when . . . 30,000 Egyptian Jews were made homeless, the quota restriction made it virtually impossible to admit any to the United States"] might . . . be misleading. The actual number of Egyptian Jews assisted by United Hias Service in coming to the United States during 1958 was 380. A total of 1,500 to 2,000 Egyptian Jews are permitted to immigrate into the U.S. under Section 15 of Public Law 85-316, passed by Congress on September 11, 1957. The delay in implementation has been of an administrative nature, but the law has nevertheless demonstrated the interest of the Congress and the administration in the plight of the Egyptian Jews, and the desire of a significant number of them to come to the United States, especially on a family reunion basis.

JAMES P. RICE  
Executive Director

United Hias Service  
New York City

## Moderation and Moderatism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

COMMENTARY is to be congratulated for publishing the thoughtful, brilliantly argued essays of Dennis H. Wrong. I believe, however, that in his latest contribution, "The Perils of Political Moderation," (January) Mr. Wrong confuses two kinds of moderation. If they are disentangled, I think Mr. Wrong's central thesis would have to be modified.

One form of moderation can be called "systemic moderation," which is held by most students to characterize the American political system. In this view, the political system acts as a vast arena in which more or less universally satisfying collective decisions are produced in the course of intergroup conflict. That this theory of the political process does not sufficiently account for the role of innovation and political leadership is no reason to deny that innovation and leadership exist in the system itself. This Mr. Wrong implies, by confounding the "moderate system" with the role of political moderates within the system. He rightly takes to task advocates of excessive moderation on substantive issues on the grounds that they play into the hands of extremists who oppose them. If these moderates err in claiming that they serve the system best by denying that politics has substance, Mr. Wrong errs in leaving this illusion undisturbed. The pecu-

liar advantage of the moderate political system of the American type is that it deals successfully with most of the immoderate claims put upon it. Presumably it is the task of sophisticated analysts and teachers like Mr. Wrong to persuade disillusioned students and faint-hearted political leaders that the system will welcome a great deal more goal-directed activity than they are accustomed to contributing to it.

NELSON W. POLSBY

Bethesda, Maryland

MR. WRONG writes:

Mr. Polsby's distinction between the moderate solutions usually achieved by the American political system and moderation as an ideological position ("moderatism" was my term for this) is well stated. But it is precisely the distinction that I thought I made, with the aid of John Stuart Mill, in my article.

Mr. Polsby seems to overlook another relevant distinction. The "American political system" includes at least three things: the formal structure of government as laid down by the Constitution, the political parties, and the "substratum" of politics—the welter of groups with conflicting and overlapping interests that constitute American society. The substratum does not impose one and only one kind of party system—the kind we have—that is compatible with our formal structure of government. Our system, it is true, has been forged out of the necessity of adapting political competition to the pluralistic nature of American society, but it does not follow that a different system might not prove to be even better adapted from a number of points of view which I suggested in the article. To argue otherwise is to be guilty of a sociological determinism that denies the autonomy of politics no less resolutely than crude Marxism. And anyway, American society is changing.

## A. J. Heschel's Philosophy

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Professor Cherbonnier ("A. J. Heschel and the Philosophy of the Bible," January) has contributed so illuminatingly to the clarification of Heschel's religious approach from a metaphysical point of view that I gladly suffer being turned into a straw man, if demolishing my "position" can aid this enterprise. Let it be stated for the record, however, that my article in the May 1958 issue of COMMENTARY was written neither as a defense of "conventional theology" nor as an attack upon Heschel. What was intended was a sympathetic appraisal of Heschel's thought as it must strike

the reader who has not yet (and the "yet" may be important here) made the "leap." The difference between Cherbonnier's approach and mine is apparently in the fact that he is writing from the point of view of someone who has already taken the "leap"—howbeit within the framework of his own religious tradition.

Also, instead of simply "ranking Heschel with the Existentialists," what I *did* write was: "By rejecting 'conceptual thinking' in favor of what he calls 'situational thinking,' and 'scholasticism' in favor of 'depth-theology,' Heschel demonstrates his general affinity with the Existentialist and Neo-Orthodox schools of thought, but it is an affinity which must be understood with specific Jewish reservations." Surely, there is—from a metaphysical point of view—all the difference in the world between making an identification and asserting a "general affinity." Nor need it be assumed that the "specific Jewish reservations," which I stated are negligible.

These reservations likewise apply to my description of Heschel as a mystic. Professor Cherbonnier will not want to deny that Hasidism, by which Heschel sets so much store, is a form of mysticism—even though, as Leo Baeck has shown in various writings, there is a significant difference between Jewish mysticism and mysticism in general.

Finally, the Jew who reads the word *mitzvah*—in Biblical and Rabbinic literature or in Heschel's writings—understands the term somewhat differently from the sense given to the word "commandments" in I John 2:3, 4. The illustration I brought from Deuteronomy 25:9 also describes a *mitzvah*; and I remain less than convinced that its performance would yield, in Cherbonnier's terms, "a dimension of knowledge which otherwise remains closed."

It would seem to me that, while I attempted to evaluate Heschel's contribution to modern Judaism in terms of a "situational thinking," based on current Jewish thought and practice, Cherbonnier, paradoxically enough for a "defender" of Heschel, subjects my article to a thorough analysis of "conceptual thinking."

JAKOB J. PETUCHOWSKI

Cincinnati, Ohio

### Praise for a Poem

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

... Much has been written about the little town (*shtetl*) in Europe, often in an unreal way. The poem "Names of Michalishek" by Menke Katz (February) makes one aware of the harshness and beauty as actually experienced by individuals. . . .

SYLVIA ABRAMS

Brooklyn, N. Y.

### Algerian Nationalism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In the exchange of letters in your February number between Mr. Maurice Goldbloom and Mr. Maurice Carr on the subject of the latter's article, "Algeria After the Referendum" (December), Mr. Carr cites the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* . . . as the source of much of his "information." . . . As far as Algeria is concerned, the *Encyclopaedia* relies entirely upon information supplied by the French; this one-sided information in no way meets the accepted standards of objectivity and honesty. . . .

However, there is one point which is not merely erroneous, but a . . . distortion and misrepresentation of the truth. The Algerians, living in a revolutionary climate, and engaged in a bitter struggle for their liberty and independence, consider their fellow countrymen regardless of race or religion, as Algerians. It is, in fact, a remarkable proof of the political maturity of the population that they have avoided the many provocations organized by the French to create an issue of religious strife among fellow Algerians. It is well known that actions of anti-Semitic origin come rather from the European *ultras*, whose past activities as supporters of Pétain and Vichy have given them ample practice. . . . We do not know where Mr. Carr has found the "statistics" he cites in this connection, and we would challenge him to prove the truth of his statements. . . . Even the French authorities have now been forced to abandon their propaganda on this matter.

Moreover, many of the members of the Jewish community in Algeria are active in the nationalist movement, and it is enough to glance at the list of names of those sentenced by French tribunals for their nationalist activities to see that Jewish Algerians are included among those paying for the liberation of their country.

A. CHANDERLI

Representative, Algerian F.L.N.  
New York City

MR. CARR writes:

Mr. Chanderli queries the casualty figures I have given for the Jews in Algeria. The source of these statistics is a thoroughly reliable Algerian Jewish organization, whose leaders hold very liberal ideas about the need for Algerian emancipation and certainly have no illusions about the anti-Semitic European *ultras*. There exist carefully compiled lists of Jews killed or wounded by F.L.N. terrorists in Algeria, and these can be published, if necessary. It is true that some Jews actively support the F.L.N. It is also true that F.L.N. killers have

—for reasons which it is up to the F.L.N. leadership to explain and excuse—claimed a disproportionately large number of Jewish victims. Unfortunately the F.L.N. has its fascists of the pan-Arab school just as the European settlers have their fascists of the Pétainist school, and the sooner the fascists in both camps are overpowered, the sooner innocent blood will cease to flow and peace with justice will come to Algeria. If that is what Mr. Chanderli aspires to, then there is no fundamental difference of opinion between us. We certainly do not agree in our reading of past history; but what counts is the present and future.

### Ancient Israel's Coins

#### TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is not easy to assess the technical evidence for reattributing the ambiguously inscribed coins of ancient Israel, so that we must give credit to Stanley Edgar Hyman for at least trying, in his review of *The History of Coins and Symbols in Ancient Israel* by Wolf Wirgin and myself (January). . . . Mr. Wirgin's main contention was that the 50 excellent types of coins conventionally ascribed to the Bar Kochba period must be reattributed. Bar Kochba was not in the coin minting business; he had a sizable war on his hands. As for the dating of these coins, there is considerable disagreement among numismatists themselves. What Mr. Wirgin has done is to bring matters to a head, drawing support from twenty years of research in the field and his private collection—one of the most important of its kind in the world.

Mr. Hyman's wit . . . often leads him exuberantly astray. There is no argument by Mr. Wirgin that the Jews under Herod manufactured counterfeits of Roman coins. Perhaps Mr. Hyman believes along with some numismatists that *all* coins which *they* assign to Bar Kochba were struck over Roman coins. One must grasp the difference between coins struck on virgin flans and those overstruck on non-Jewish coins. This technical point—and several others—was not made clear in the review.

In talking about the migration of symbols in the ancient world and those symbols which are found on the old Hebrew coins, I referred also to mythology. Mr. Hyman comments that "Mandel . . . seems to think that Amalthea

was Dionysus' mother." My original statement reads: "Amalthea was also the name of Bacchus' parent. . . ." If I am wrong in believing this about Bacchus (or Dionysus), then I am in distinguished company indeed. Milton in his *Paradise Lost* (4:275) says: "That Nyseian isle. . . . Hid Amalthea, and her florid son,/Young Bacchus from his stepdame Rhea's eye." Possibly Mr. Hyman has confused Amalthea with Rhea. The noted mythology-scholar Charles Mills Gayley quite explicitly states: "The name Amalthea is given also to the mother of Bacchus." As for the web of mythology surrounding the Titans of Greek mythology, I used one strand of post-Homeric commentary which claims that man is descended from the Titans. When the Titans—and not the Bacchantes who are unleashed on me by Mr. Hyman—killed Dionysus, their original sin and guilt was passed on to man. This condensed reference, however, is tangential to my main subject, namely the specific symbols on ancient Jewish coins. There "it would seem impossible to dismiss his evidence," says Mr. Hyman. The presentation of that evidence, after all, was my primary objective.

The passage I quoted from Plutarch's second-hand account that describes Jews as worshipping Dionysus may strike Mr. Hyman as "terribly funny." If anything, this kind of distortion of Jewish ceremonies by outside observers is terribly tragic. Throughout history such misrepresentations have caused Jews incalculable harm. . . .

Viewing the Bible as a prime historical source—in addition to its ethical teachings—has yielded significant results as proven time and time again by such archeologists as Nelson Glueck. I don't understand Mr. Hyman's objection to the use of the Bible to show, for example, that the palm tree symbol found its way into ancient Israel as early as King Solomon's reign when Hiram of Tyre was commissioned to do carvings on the Temple. This Tyrean symbol was adopted for coin use by later minters. In our own time, Israel has again used this symbol, an age-old motif, to commemorate a heroic past. The original meaning of the symbol of course is lost, but the historical pattern is repeated. . . .

SIEGFRIED MANDEL

East Meadow, New York

# BOOKS IN REVIEW

## Christians and Jews

PIOUS AND SECULAR AMERICA. By REINHOLD NIEBUHR. Scribners. 150 pp. \$3.00.

*Reviewed by* W. W. BARTLEY, III

A book by Reinhold Niebuhr is always an excellent illustration of the truth of his basic principle: that good and bad are inextricably mixed in any human product. *Pious and Secular America* is no exception. For dubious analyses are so intimately interwoven with fresh and trenchant observations, in this collection of recent Niebuhr essays, that the reader alternates—staccato—between admiration and exasperation.

Four of the nine essays have been published previously in American journals and magazines—a ratio which just barely justifies Niebuhr's prefatory assurance that "Most of the essays are published for the first time in this volume." Their titles reflect the range of Niebuhr's thinking, from Russian-American, Negro-White, and Christian-Jewish relations, through higher education, to frustration, mystery, and meaning.

The most stimulating essay is "The Relations of Christians and Jews in Western Civilization," a paper Niebuhr read last spring before the joint meeting of the faculties of New York's Jewish Theological Seminary and Union Theological Seminary. While this essay is very interesting in itself, it will have its greatest significance for our intellectual historians. For Niebuhr makes a major step in it which considerably widens the already quickly growing gap between Protestantism's traditions and its major contemporary theologians. Niebuhr, the Evangelical Protestant theologian, now adds to his previous abandonment of Christian social ethics a sharp new rejection of Christian evangelism among the Jews. Such Christian missionary activities are wrong, he writes in this essay, not only because they are futile, but because "the two faiths despite differences are sufficiently alike for the Jew to find God more

easily in terms of his own religious heritage than by subjecting himself to the hazards of guilt feeling involved in a conversion to a faith, which whatever its excellencies, must appear to him as a symbol of an oppressive majority culture."

"Both Jews and Christians will have to accept the hazards of their historic symbols," Niebuhr continues. "These symbols may be the bearers of an unconditioned message to the faithful. But to those outside the faith they are defaced by historic taints."

This is a bold step on Niebuhr's part; and one that I admire very much. Actually, it will seem like a *new* idea only to those ardent Christians who organize committees "for the conversion of the Jews." Those of us for whom Niebuhr's recommendation is a familiar assumption should not, however, underestimate its significance—coming, as it does, from Morningside Heights' chief Augustinian.

I have only one rather obvious question for Niebuhr on this topic: once Protestantism abandons its exclusive claims in *any* area, where can it rightfully retain them? It is not only the Jews for whom Christianity's historic symbols are defaced and tainted. Moreover, many groups which are neither Jewish nor Christian have rich traditions in which their adherents find fulfillment—no matter how different this fulfillment may be from that to which Christians sometimes lay claim.

Niebuhr's recommendation about evangelism is a natural outcome of his comparison, in the same essay, of Jewish and Christian social ethics. Leading off from a discussion of the sources of anti-Semitism, Niebuhr indicts Christians for excessive complacency over the failure of their "allegedly superior universal faith" to inculcate charity for other religious groups. This particular failure is only one symptom, for Niebuhr, that the prophetic Old Testament sense of justice is more relevant to community problems than the Christian idea of love, even though the Christian doctrines of love and grace provide a superior analysis of the "human situation."

The Jewish sense of community justice and social realism is close to the "piecemeal social engineering," within the framework of democratic institutions, that Niebuhr has championed since the early 1940's. On the other hand, the utopianism and recklessness of the Christian ethic were, he rightly thinks, at the bottom of much of America's irresponsibility and naive domestic and foreign policy during the 1920's and early 30's.

His own view of the Christian ethic, Niebuhr indicates, lies close to that of Karl Barth, who describes the Sermon on the Mount prescriptions as "eschatological," referring "beyond history" and not directly relevant to any historical situation or social ethic. Niebuhr is willing, however, to temper this view with the idea that the Sermon on the Mount defines "the ethics in the nth degree," toward which we might work *historically*.

He is led to this modification of Barth's view by an argument of C. H. Dodd, whose book, *The Gospel and the Law*, Niebuhr cites. Dodd had warned that the ethical requirements of the Sermon on the Mount could not be eschatological, since the demands to turn the other cheek and go the second mile are obviously not meant for an ideal situation, but for the world "in which we encounter evil men."

I admire Niebuhr's willingness to modify his view of the Christian ethic in the light of criticism based on conflicting evidence in the New Testament. But I am afraid he does so at the peril of inconsistency. For once he puts the Sermon ethic back into history—no matter how "nth" a degree in the future—Niebuhr himself becomes a utopian. For as his own astute remarks about human nature imply, our historical "nth degree" ideals may also change with advancing experience and knowledge. A more realistic view of human potential—whether derived from Christian concepts of original sin or from, say, Freudian theory—has led to a rejection of many "nth degree" ethical ideals of the past.

Once Niebuhr permits the Christian ethic an historical role, he exposes it, at least in principle, to similar invalidation by future information. If he wishes to protect the Sermon ethic from such attack, as well as to prevent its being used as a guide in realistic social situations, he would do well to remain with Barth all the way, and to declare the Christian ethic to be thoroughly eschatological, beyond history.

To be sure, as Dodd points out, such a view cannot be reconciled with certain features of

the New Testament. But this lack of reconciliation is, of course, a problem only so long as the assumption that the New Testament does provide one single consistent "Christian" ethic is maintained.

My own opinion prefers a rather obvious alternative: that a number of rather different ethical views are to be found in both testaments and in the Jewish and Christian traditions. We may expect to find some injunctions that do not readily fit any easy pigeonholing of the traditions. Furthermore, as our experience grows, we may find that some of the injunctions and some of the ideals are applicable in historic situations while others are totally impracticable. An appropriate approach, therefore, would ask not so much whether a recommendation or an ideal were typically Jewish or Christian as whether it were sound. Niebuhr's admirable appreciation of Judaism's tradition, and his courageous abandonment of Christian exclusivism, make such an approach possible.

### Nazism as Seen from Below

THE BLACK MARCH. By PETER NEUMANN. Translated by Constantine FitzGibbon. William Sloane Associates. 312 pp. \$4.00.

*Reviewed by* FRANCIS GOLFFING

PETER NEUMANN—a former SS lieutenant in the Viking division—records in this diary faithfully and *sans phrase* his early upbringing in a small Prussian town, his activities in the Hitler Youth and various SS training camps, and his experiences at the Eastern front. Readers who expect military or political revelations will put the book impatiently aside after the first fifty pages. What is revealed here is the operation of a commonplace mind and a pleasant, if somewhat torpid, disposition, furnishing a view of the SS and the Nazi army as seen from below—the modest subaltern's perspective—rather than from above.

But the "frog perspective" too has become a convention, every bit as much as the grand view from the heights occupied by executive or strategist. Here we are presented with the whole somber cliché: a drab lower-middle-class background, the mother ineffectual, the father—a petty railway clerk—disgruntled and politically confused; the provincial high school run on rabid racist lines; the perky kid brother gain-

ing prestige among his comrades for his skill as a Jew-baiter (his specialty is to spot Jews who fail to wear the yellow star and then report them to the Hitler Youth); last but not least, the full gamut of stock reactions to Western civilization, capitalism, the Jews, communism, Russia. All of this is trite and without interest. On a few occasions only—far too few, I fear, for most readers' patience—the smooth pattern is interrupted, a small qualm registered. The suitor of Lena, the boy's sister, is an officer in the *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*, who has signalized himself by his extreme brutality during an East Prussian pogrom in 1936. Papa Neumann refuses to give Lena to a mass killer and is promptly put in prison, at his daughter's instance, on the charge of Red Front activities before 1933. The boy's reaction is mixed: he dislikes the arrogant SS officer as much as he does his own father, and he is frankly shocked by his sister's denunciation. But then he puts the whole matter out of his mind with incredible ease: "The Party is always right." His moral notions are far too primitive for a genuine conflict of loyalties to arise; he simply cannot think through any situation of moderate complexity. We are back where we started: the rigid authoritarian pattern, never to be broken throughout the rest of this narrative.

But what puzzles us most in reading Nazi memoirs and autobiographies is not the writers' moral innocence and blind submission to authority but the equivocal nature of their sensibilities, especially in the matter of sex. Often an extreme callousness and something approaching genuine tenderness jostle one another uneasily in these records, and Neumann is no exception to the rule. The first girl he falls in love with turns out to be a Jewess, but this discovery does not unsettle him in the least. He remains loyal and affectionate toward his mistress without however—and this is the curious point—revising his radical anti-Semitic notions to the slightest degree. It is equally curious that he exhibits no fear whatsoever either on her account or on his own. Are we to praise him for his chivalry and courage or despise him for his patent lack of perception? Precisely what sort of muddleheadedness is at work here? what order of reasoning and emotion joined to perfectly normal instincts and a well-functioning, if ordinary, intelligence?

Shortly after he has met the girl of his choice he is sent to a delightful establishment

run by the SS, an experimental breeding station where he is to act the part of "stallion." He feels both proud and embarrassed at the prospect, also slightly amused. In the recreation room—complete with milk bar, ping pong tables and discreet dance music—he falls in love with one of the pretty, well-groomed girls sent to the experiment station for the obvious purpose, takes her to bed with him, consummates the union and spends the six days and nights allotted to each mock-married couple in a state of ecstatic bliss. Once again, Neumann's description of the episode shows touches of authentic feeling but no awareness at all of the elements in the situation—grimly farcical in this case rather than tragic—which, it is safe to assume, would give pause to any civilized being not cast in the German mold.

The long last section of the book dealing with Neumann's experiences at the Eastern front adds nothing to our understanding of that gigantic struggle, though his account of the SS's last-ditch stand in Vienna is both thematically arresting and well handled. Neumann exhibits the usual *sang froid* of the junior SS officer, an occasional scruple of the conscience, and a reluctance—much to his credit, certainly—to engage in wanton brutality. Yet politically he remains an innocent to the very end.

Notwithstanding the absolute nullity of the authors, books like this exercise their hold on the reader's imagination, simply because the facts they are recording are the crucial facts of 20th-century history, at once horrifying and monumental. Adventitiously, willy-nilly, the crudest and most banal reports of what went on in Germany participate in that tragedy, that horror. With this proviso, the reader is encouraged to turn to the diary of Peter Neumann, one cipher among millions.

### Perspective on the Arabs

THE MIDDLE EAST IN TRANSITION. Edited by WALTER Z. LAQUEUR. Praeger. 564 pp. \$8.75.

Reviewed by JOEL CARMICHAEL

THE confluence of the Arab renaissance and Soviet policy, a central factor in world politics, is the dominant theme of this latest compilation of Middle East studies, edited by Walter Z. Laqueur. A collection of articles, some previously published and others specially written, it

is the most intelligently organized book on the subject to appear in a great many years. Israel is fully discussed in a brilliant article by Isaiah Berlin, but is otherwise referred to only obliquely; the book deals primarily with the internal evolution of the modern Arabic-speaking world and with the role of the Soviet Union and the Communist movement.

MANY articles in the second half of the book refer to this crucial question of the interaction of Arab nationalism and Soviet Communism, but none so pithily as those by Sir Bernard Lewis and A. V. Sherman. In different ways, both make the same point: that there is nothing in Islamic or Arabic-speaking society *per se* that makes it inaccessible to Communism. They both dismiss as a foible the recent tendency of treating modern Islam as somehow "inherently" anti-Communist because of a presumed "philosophical irreconcilability" between Islam and Communism. Just as scholars and commentators have clung to an outmoded view of Communism as a coherent body of doctrine that is exactly the same today as in Lenin's lifetime, so they have assumed that Arab nationalism is identical with historic Islam and is, moreover, the same sort of movement as the recent nationalisms of Europe and the United States.

Now the most obvious characteristic of the torrent of affirmation generally accepted as Arab "national ideology" is its utter emptiness. As Sherman points out in discussing the most coherent and recent book (1957) on the meaning of Arab nationalism, by Hazem Nusseibeh, "we are hardly wiser at the end than at the beginning." This is not surprising, for the entire doctrine of Arab nationalism is exhausted by the simple affirmation that "the Arabs are a nation." Musa Alami, for instance, the most practical of the Arab nationalist ideologues, says that the "Arab people are in great need of a myth," but he gives no indication of what the myth is or how it should be created. The naive acceptance by Western commentators of statements like these as facts utterly warps any perspective.

A similar acceptance of propaganda as fact is evident in the general discussion of Communist activity. When the Bolsheviks took power in Russia, the party of ideologues became a corps of administrators and practice began to remake theory. Now that Soviet influence has engulfed more than a third of the human race, and the administrative functions of the leader-

ship have expanded correspondingly, what is put forward as doctrine is more obviously than ever a hotch-potch of *ad hoc* tactical devices.

The question, accordingly, of the vulnerability of Islam to Communism is really one of the convergence of Soviet and Arab "national" interests—which has nothing to do with any harmony between Islamic and Communist "thought." If we think of events in the Middle East in terms of functioning institutions, it will be simpler to assess the sources of the collaboration between the Arab nationalist movement and the Soviet regime. Sherman makes the point graphically in describing the attraction felt by the Nasser junta for Communism, not as a doctrine but as a mechanism of practical politics: "They began to discover that the Soviet Union offered them techniques for bureaucratic anti-capitalism and new justification for confiscating property, procedures for economic control and organization; it offered methods of building up a party-state apparatus and manipulating the masses, or organizing propaganda at home and abroad." "A Textbook for Dictators in Backward Countries" might well be composed of extracts from actual Soviet administration. The only thing, indeed, that Arab nationalists agree on, when they get down to brass tacks, is the necessity of state economic control, an idea with which they are infatuated. And it is this notion that may well turn out to be the basis for the aggrandizement of the leadership of the Arabic-speaking countries. It also obviously facilitates a relatively frictionless, large scale Soviet intervention in the Middle East.

It does not matter that the practical stages in the development of state economic control are for the time being naively disregarded; that the sudden passion of Arab intellectuals for state control has all the earmarks of a Levantine love for the highfalutin catchwords of an Occident they affect to despise; it does not even matter that the middle class from which nearly all the intellectuals come might be hamstrung by any such program if it were made effective. What does matter is that at the present stage of Arab political development this acclamation of state control, however irresponsible, is less so than anything else in the official propaganda of the movement.

The state of the actual Communist parties in the Arabic-speaking countries may thus be relatively unimportant from a Western point of view; whether Nasser sponsors Communist

This ancient commentary on one of the most familiar and frequently quoted Books of the Bible presents a wealth of clarifying detail and profound observation on its meaning.

## THE MIDRASH ON PSALMS

*translated from the Hebrew  
and Aramaic by*

WILLIAM G. BRAUDE

The Midrash is a succession of homilies concerned with the recurrence or comparison of words and situations in the Scrip-

tures as a means of bringing forth their contents. Compiled by Jewish rabbis since 200 A.D., its subject matter is enormous. Phrase by phrase and word by word it seeks to determine in what light the innermost meaning of the Scripture is most clearly revealed.

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parties or eliminates them, it still remains the strongest possibility that the fate of the area will be determined by bureaucratic collaboration between the already centralized administrations of the Arabic-speaking countries and the U.S.S.R. The institutions already functioning enable the elites of the various Arabic-speaking countries to manipulate their own masses and to collaborate with the appropriate agencies of the Soviet Union.

What really counts, in short, is what has taken place lately—the transport of equipment and technical personnel from the Soviet Union to Egypt at the very moment that Nasser was intensifying his repression of the Egyptian Communist party. The fact that Soviet Russia has taken responsibility for Egypt's supply needs in her recent spurt of modernization is just as important as the more dramatic political upheaval in Iraq, which took place after the present anthology was published.

Moreover, as Sherman points out, because of the uninterrupted Islamic tradition of authoritarianism, there is even a structural similarity between Islamic society and Soviet-style Communism which facilitates collaboration. And since Islamic society has always rested on

three pillars—the army, the bureaucracy, and the clergy—the first two of which have proven only too susceptible to Soviet influence, the Communists would only need to “come to terms” with the clergy to have a free hand.

Though Sherman and Lewis make this point most explicitly, it is borne out by the background material provided in many other articles. Sir Hamilton Gibb has an erudite and perceptive account of the dynamics of social reform in the Modern Middle East; Morroe Berger gives an excellent analysis of the Arab middle class, while Charles Issawi and Said Himadeh, both economists, present an unusually readable discussion of the interaction between the economic development of the Middle East and the social upheaval of modern times. An article by Hal Lehrman shows us the potentialities of Iraqi resources, now doubtless to be exploited by the new Soviet-oriented groups in power, while the meagerness of the *nouveau* Egyptian intelligentsia is described in an excellent essay by Georges Ketman, an intellectual profile of the new rulers and their social milieu.

The anthology is surprisingly free of the usual partisanship, pedantry, or effusiveness that afflicts so much comment on the Middle

East, though there is a whiff of the first in an article by Stewart Perowne on the refugees, of the second in one by Sylvia Haim on Islam and the theory of Arab nationalism, and of the third in the articles by Muhammad Ayyad on culture in Arab society and Gebran Majdalani on Arab socialism.

It is regrettable that Western observers have been distracted by Arab rhetorical effervescence from studying the actual mainsprings of contemporary Middle Eastern society. From its very inception, the Arab national movement has developed contrapuntally, in reaction to something outside itself: first to the Turks, then to the British and the French, in the last ten years to the tiny State of Israel. This has partly been the result of its lack of any social program: that is, any "real" objectives. It is thus a pity that the American press has simply neglected the specific material aims, or rather the *necessary directions*, of any Arab nationalist movement, in favor of its intellectual superstructure. By providing a concentrated, dynamic analysis of an evolving society from different points of view, *The Middle East in Transition* is an invaluable antidote to popular journalism.

### Six Writers of Crisis

THE PICARESQUE SAINT. By R. W. B. LEWIS. J. B. Lippincott. 317 pp. \$6.00.

*Reviewed by* JEAN GARRIGUE

THIS is criticism with a philosophical intent. R. W. B. Lewis is not interested in studying the novels of his chosen six authors with close technical analysis nor in making judgments on that level. He is concerned rather with their attitudes toward the age, man, God, truth, love, as they reflect the "passions and miseries" of the human situation. It is also criticism with a thesis and it establishes that thesis by means of the grand dialectic, by categories, by setting up opposites on opposites. I shall note a few: death vs. life; exile vs. participation; disinterestedness vs. commitment; the aesthetic vs. the moral; faith vs. skepticism or nihilism; God vs. no God; life vs. art.

Its subject is the work of six contemporary novelists—André Malraux, Alberto Moravia, Albert Camus, Ignazio Silone, Graham Greene, and William Faulkner; the latter included not so much for the totality of his work as for two recent books, *The Bear* and *A Fable*, that sug-

gest, like Silone's *Bread and Wine* and Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, that concept of the figure for which the book is named: the rebel saint, the saint *manqué*, the saint not so much of God as of humanity.

Defining these novelists as "representative men in the lofty Emersonian sense," Mr. Lewis establishes the distinction at once between their work and that of the "first generation"—i.e. Proust, Mann, and Joyce. The first generation represents the aesthetic in all its purity and luminous severity—the "city of art" necessarily distant on its parapets. What the second generation represents can best be summed up, he says, in the single word "human." Elsewhere he equates "human" with "life," characterizing these second generation novelists as being "agonizingly dedicated to life" in contrast to the members of the Great Triad who, in the face of a disintegrating Western culture, found their sense of life, as well as the absolute value, in art. The first generation were exiles in one sense or another, he points out; the second generation—specifically Malraux, Silone, and Camus—were committed and involved, politically and socially. But whether "artists in action" or not, what they most brought to the novel was a "humanistic creed," even a "humanistic theology."

"Twentieth century literature began on the note of death," Mr. Lewis declares. If the second generation had quite as much death, considering the cataclysmic 30's and 40's, their response was "to center not upon the ubiquity of sickness and of death but on the act of living," to make the grand affirmation by attempting to put together again man's broken image of himself. They derived their "renewed sense of life," Mr. Lewis argues, by looking anew at man and his ambiguously heroic possibilities in a non-heroic world, by emphasizing the necessity for compassion, participation, solidarity, "the tragic fellowship," the "virile fraternity." In a world full of hostile distrust, with men isolated from other men by ideologies and competitive rancors, they created fictive heroes who found the ultimate good in companionship, friendship, a sharing of the bread and wine of thought and action.

The concept of companionship finds its apotheosis in what Mr. Lewis defines as "the representative figure of the contemporary novel—the figure of the saint, who shares more than bread and wine, who shares the very sufferings of mankind, participates in them, as a way of

touching and submitting to what is most *real* in the world today." This is the figure of the half-rogue, half-saint, kin of Don Quixote and Dostoevsky's sacred idiot. He is "the outsider who shares, the outcast who enters in, dedicated . . . to what yet remains of the sacred in the ravaged human community." Above all, he retains his share in mortal weakness; he has not bartered his contradictions away, nor ceased to suffer from the sorry dualities of wish and deed, vision and the intractable real. He emerges first in *Bread and Wine* as Pietro Spina, the revolutionary disguised as priest, "whose conversion from politics to companionship . . . would signalize the humanizing of the one, the spiritual enlightenment of the other." He is to be found again in the alcoholic priest of Greene's *The Power and the Glory* and in Faulkner's *The Bear* as a kind of leather-stocking old Adam who renounces his tainted inheritance for woods and animal innocence. Mr. Lewis notes this fictive hero's capacity for sacrificial heroism, for taking on the guilt of another, or even giving up his life for another (Silone), and notes, also, the religious parallel.

SEPARATE and brilliant chapters then follow on each of the novelists. Mr. Lewis's knowledge of the French and Italian literary scene—he includes remarks from conversations with Silone, Moravia, and Camus as well as comments from French and Italian critics—gives him an easy authority. Affinities and dissimilarities between the six are noted again and again; one obtains a rich sense of the diverse ways in which these representative sensibilities have reflected the contradictions of their age—from Moravia still refusing to give meaningfulness to a world deprived of it, to Graham Greene who in a world where God was dead would have him resurrected, to Faulkner who moves in *The Bear* from his earlier position of "tension between the creative and the destructive" into a "world of light like that following the Incarnation."

But in his zeal to note the differences between the "fathers" and "sons," the progress from the religion of art to the religion of man (from the hero as artist to the hero of the novel of crisis), Mr. Lewis would seem to ride his thesis with almost too much energy. For all his instinct for delicate contrapuntal poise, that maneuvering of the dialectic, that shuttling between the poles of art and life, the aesthetic and the moral, would often seem to result in a

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kind of rigid trimming of the material he is dealing with to the theory at hand.

Though it is not quite said, Mr. Lewis implies that the moral beauty of fictive heroes capable of the selfless, even the noble action, is more significant, is better for us than, say, Proust's relentless revelations of human weakness, egoism, cruelty. This is quaking ground, indeed quicksand. When he blows the dusty trumpet for the moral ("moral force, not moral preaching"), must it be supposed that the aesthetic is in another camp, far up the abandoned mountainside? Defining Silone, he says: "His fiction illustrates exactly the peculiar business that fiction has perforce been up to in this generation—the business of disclosing in life itself new grounds for the very sense of life; and the business of fashioning out of the ruins a more truthful and more human image of man than the forlorn, essentially aesthetic and often dehydrated images received from the previous generation." Settembrini, Bloom, Charlus, dehydrated?

Speaking of Malraux, he says: "He rejected the private world of the imagination with its glossy aesthetics; he turned outward to confront the formidable fact of deadliness . . . in the immediate historic world." The word *glossy* is baiting and invidious; one may ask if the imaginative and historic worlds must be posited as implacable opposites, or if Joyce, Proust, Mann and many others were incapable of mirroring the deadly, daily world. Likewise, in his enthusiasm for *Bread and Wine*, he tends to overlook what is for some readers a very definite lack. He admits to its episodic quality, quotes Italian critics who have called it the "non-novel" and said that it reads better in translation than in its non-literary Italian,

and lets the case rest there. The case doesn't, quite. Can one read and re-read *Bread and Wine* as one can other novels? In terms of its apparent didacticism, and its episodic nature which deprives it of unity of proportion, it does not give that kind of "truth" of beauty which the novels of the first generation give.

Nevertheless, if Mr. Lewis seems almost too insistent on transmuting some of these fictive heroes into religious abstractions, and if he seems to place undue stress on religious parallels, his lucid care and concern with these works of "rebellion, inquiry and conversion"—mirroring the "age and body of the time, its form and pressure"—yield much for us to reflect on. Meanwhile, the writers of the Third Generation must deal in their own terms with what aspects they can of this century that is still with us, machine-driven, warheaded, moon-rocketing.

### The Historian as Patriot

SPAIN. A MODERN HISTORY. By SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA. Praeger. 698 pp. \$7.50.

*Reviewed by* GEORGE LICHTHEIM

WHEN the first edition of this book was published in 1930, Salvador de Madariaga held the chair of Spanish literature at Oxford, a locality to which he returned in the fateful year 1936, having previously served as Spanish delegate to the League of Nations, Ambassador to the United States and France, and (for some turbulent weeks in 1934) as Minister of Education in one of the short-lived Republican cabinets. The civil war thus found him in self-imposed exile, a position underlined by his resolute condemnation of both sides to that fratricidal struggle. The greatly enlarged second edition of his work deals fully with the rise and fall of the Republic, without modifying the position already elaborated in the 1930 version. Here is Spain seen through the eyes of that rarest of creatures, an authentic Spanish liberal.

Don Salvador is aware of the difficulty of his position and makes no attempt to hide it. He knows that Spanish liberalism has been a failure; he also knows that Spanish history since the 17th century is a record of decline,

and that even the brilliant 16th century expansion was in the nature of a tour de force which aggravated the underlying problems instead of helping to solve them. He is likewise aware that, in modern times anyhow, the Church has been the ruin of Spain, closely seconded by the army. With all this he is patriotically determined to defend the glory of Spain against the carplings of the foreigner. The result is a curiously unbalanced account in which minor achievements are uncritically set off against major disasters, while some of the worst blemishes on the record, e.g. the endless atrocities of the Inquisition, find virtually no mention. If a general impression of common-sense realism emerges nevertheless, the reason is that about half the book is concerned with the Second Republic and the civil war (1931-9), where the facts are well established and the author's position enables him to make short work of the propagandists on both sides. Some of the earlier chapters are less satisfying, notably the section on the Spanish conquest of South America which suffers from excessive reliance on the *tu quoque* form of argument. It may be that Spanish imperialism in the New World was no worse than European imperialism elsewhere (though there is evidence to the contrary), but it will not do to pass over the horrors in silence just because British pamphleteers have been disingenuous in singling them out.

A certain tension between the historian and the patriot is indeed noticeable throughout the work. There are some energetic historical brush-strokes: "The Reconquista is not so much a war as a historical period, the true meaning of which can only be grasped when medieval Spain is seen as the frontier between the Islamic and the European civilizations of the time." "America, in Spanish history, was a white elephant . . . the greatness of Spain, insofar as it came from the discovery and colonization of America, had something abnormal and almost monstrous about it. It was more in the nature of a diseased growth than in that of organic development, and it contributed greatly to prevent the normal evolution of a foreign policy adequately adapted to the requirements of the nation." "Much has been written, and much may still be waiting to be written, in the inkpots of the world, on Spanish conservatism. But how much of this conservatism is due to the fact that, once an agrarian system goes wrong, it becomes so

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hopelessly entangled with a wrong political evolution that centuries may elapse before the nation evolves out of the meshes or breaks through them toward a new freedom?" As against such bursts of realism there are lengthy disquisitions on the Spanish "character" and its supposed effect on the national life, of which one can only say that the author has failed to integrate them with his own insights into the structural troubles of Spanish society. And what is one to make of the suggestion that if Alfonso XIII had been properly brought up "Spain would probably have become a peaceful and contented nation with a monarchy well grounded in a prosperous peasantry?" This is the sort of thing French defenders of the Bourbon monarchy used to write, until Tocqueville came along and demonstrated the intrinsic connection between the character of the Old Regime and the catastrophe of the Revolution. Coming from Sr. de Madariaga it is all the more odd because he is aware that the major troubles of his native country are linked to its antiquated system of landownership. Does he think Alfonso might have operated a revolution where his autocratic predecessors had failed—or not tried?

At any rate, holding the opinions he did—viz. that Spain needed a parliamentary system on the British pattern and an enlightened liberal government—it was inevitable that he should have refused to take sides when matters came to the boil in 1936; or rather, that he should have sided with the small group of liberals who called a plague on both sides. It was of course impossible for him to join Franco—he had no illusion as to what the dictatorship of army, Church and landowners meant for Spain. But the Republic had already offended him by its chaotic politics, and now thoroughly alarmed him by its violence and its growing subservience to Russia and Communism (though he is careful to point out that neither had anything to do with the outbreak of the conflict, which sprang from the

accumulation of purely Spanish passions). It is noteworthy that in an appendix he pays tribute to the late Franz Borkenau's work on the civil war, *The Spanish Cockpit*, as one of the few writings of the period that come close to an understanding of the realities; and what is the chief of these realities? That the civil war would have occurred even if Communism and Fascism had never been heard of! Doubtless very true, but a conclusion of this kind casts a rather bleak illumination on the history of modern Spain. Is it really, in the light of this analysis, adequate to say that the civil war was brought about "by the civil war within the Socialist Party," i.e. by the ambition of Largo Caballero (as against Prieto and the moderates who wanted to work with the liberals in upholding parliamentary rule) to lead a "proletarian revolution"?

Too much of Sr. de Madariaga's own work is devoted to an analysis of the basic weaknesses of Spanish democracy to permit so facile a conclusion. He defines the inherent ills of Spain as "separatism and dictatorship," whether exercised by the army, the Church, or some political party of the right or left. But this is merely another way of saying that the country has not been properly unified, at any rate not since the 18th century, when the medieval integration broke down. There is no true moral community, and civil war has been made endemic by the weakness of the central government. Sr. de Madariaga knows this and on occasion states it; he even concedes that the roots of the trouble reach far back into the past; but then patriotism intervenes—Spain's great age was also the age of absolutism, therefore absolutism must be absolved from the charges leveled against it. Instead, England and France are made responsible for promoting a decline which on the author's own showing would have occurred anyhow.

This apologetic frame of mind carries over into a discussion of themes on which a liberal historian might have been expected to speak

out a little more boldly. "The expulsion of the Jews was not a Roman but a Spanish idea. . . . What was essential was a unity of faith. Hence the expulsion of the Jews. Ferdinand and Isabel have been severely criticized by learned economists and historians for having overlooked the disastrous economic consequences of such a measure. We might as well criticize Mahatma Gandhi for disregarding the political philosophy of Henry Ford." Really? Was the systematic spoliation of the Jewish community, in the joint interests of Church and State (who shared the proceeds), such an unworldly affair? And might not a liberal have commented on the non-economic aspects of the matter? Again, few readers would gather from this massive and learned work that the Spain of the Counter-Reformation made itself responsible for extirpating the Protestant heresy by fire and sword. Sr. de Madariaga is duly contemptuous of the intellectual torpor displayed by the Spanish clergy in modern times, and he severely rebukes it for lending its aid to the shortsighted greed of the possessing classes and their brutal repression of the labor movement; but there was apparently not much wrong with the Church in the age when Spain was Great. He even manages to unearth some Spanish followers of Erasmus. Alas, the brief attempt to introduce humanism into Spain came to an end with the death of the Inquisitor who favored Erasmian literature. It is the old story: if only the autocrat had been properly advised. . . . Voltaire would have agreed; but modern liberalism has surely evolved beyond this somewhat oldfashioned manner of viewing the world.

### Images of Sculpture

EPSTEIN. PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEOFFREY IRELAND. INTRODUCTION BY LAURIE LEE. André Deutsch (London). Distributed by New York Graphic Society. Unpaginated. \$12.00.

*Reviewed by* ALFRED WERNER

SIR JACOB EPSTEIN told me that he was not too happy about this elegant volume: it was much too "personal." Yet I found nothing more intimate in it than a picture of the artist with his collie. The sculptor appears in several pictures, but always in the midst of his work; most of the photographs are of the statuary.

It is tempting to contrast this book with *The Private World of Pablo Picasso*, by David Douglas Duncan, published last year. Duncan's more than 300 pictures (many of them not larger than passport photographs) reveal Picasso as an extrovert, almost as much given to histrionics as Dali. He poses in his bathtub, or in an African helmet and his girl friend's petticoat; he is masked as an Italian clown, he watches a bull fight, carves a chicken, fires a pistol. Photographer Ireland's approach is entirely different. Whereas in the Picasso volume paintings and sculptures are no more important than friends, children, and household pets, Epstein here appears small and insignificant beside his creations, many of which are of gigantic proportions. At seventy-eight, he is a big-boned, homely man in work clothes splashed with clay, and looks like a New York taxi driver or, rather, a Jewish "paintner." But his eyes are very vivid, very much alive.

There aren't many sculptures by Epstein in this country (the 1958 catalogue of New York's Museum of Modern Art lists only three bronzes and one marble group); we must therefore content ourselves with photographs of them. Ireland, who spent two years observing Epstein, concentrates on the last decade of the sculptor's work, letting some of the older, better known bronze heads appear in the background.

Oddly, some works seem more impressive in these photographs than they are *in situ*. The 25-foot high "Christ in Majesty" looks magnificent both as a plaster figure and in the subsequent aluminum casting. There is Byzantine restraint about the figure, though head, hands, and feet are done with expressive realism, and it is one of the finest samples of Epstein's *Altersstil*. According to the *Manchester Guardian*, however, the figure is too large for its position in the cathedral at Cardiff, Wales. The same source reports that, by contrast, the stone group (a mother carrying her lifeless son) for the London Trades Union Congress is too small for the courtyard in which it stands.

The statuary group called "Social Consciousness" is also unfortunately placed. It consists of three colossal bronzes: the central figure depicts "The Eternal Mother," while the two figures on the right symbolize "Succor," and the two on the left "Compassion"; with thin, elongated bodies and expressive faces, they are indeed very powerful. But the photograph might have told Philadelphia's Fairmount Park Association, which commissioned this monu-

ment, that the three pieces should be placed apart, their link being literary rather than artistic. Set on individual pedestals and separated by at least thirty yards, they would not have competed with each other. In their present position—grouped together at the rear entrance to Philadelphia's Museum of Art—there is too much going on around them which distracts the eye from the formal merits of each unit.

Ireland is a surrealist who can give an unearthly sort of life to sculpture by photographing it from unusual angles, distributing light and shade in a special way, blurring or accentuating outlines. In the introduction, Laurie Lee, one of England's younger poets, aptly says of the "Social Consciousness" photos:

"In his treatment of the figures—enclosed and shadowed by the foundry walls—he [Ireland] gives us something which no one, anywhere, will ever see in the same light again. Slashed by his lenses, darkened by London's skies, separate, together, looming close and far, they must haunt us forever as he first saw them."

Typical of Ireland's method is a photo montage of portrait heads on shelves—a nightmarish vision that could have come from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. The still life with Epstein's tools and a pair of old shoes could be a *trompe l'oeil* picture by the 19th-century American, William M. Harnett. Unforgettable is the studio shot—T. S. Eliot on the floor and Gina Lollobrigida to the right, while the huge, partly shrouded figure of "Ecce Homo" is in the center, towering above all the dozens of heads of celebrities.

Mr. Lee considers "Ecce Homo" the most powerful of Epstein's carvings: "The thorn-crowned, rope-bound, martyred Christ is terrible in his silence, his grief and accusations. Squat, square, the totem of our crimes, he stands before us in a pitiless, blinding light. No chisel was ever less compromising than Epstein's in this work. Ten thousand churchfuls of sentimentalized Christs are denied forever by this raw and savage figure. This was a Man, not a doll, and looking upon his face and hands we can no longer take refuge in the pretty pieties."

Epstein's admirers are still divided into two camps: those who adore the modeler and deplore that the artist ever strayed into the field of carving, and those who judge carvings like "Adam" or "Ecce Homo" as far superior to the bronze portrait heads. Mr. Lee manages to reconcile the two views. Epstein, he says,



is an unusual portraitist ("each head is vibrant with the life of the subject"), though of course, his imagination can develop more freely in his vision hewn from stone: "To be confronted with new carvings by Epstein is to discover new Easter Islands."

Curiously, Mr. Lee does not once mention the fact that Epstein is a Jew who grew up among Yiddish-speaking immigrants in New York's Hester Street. He says: "Jacob Epstein came to this country [England] from . . . America, and by descent, from Poland." Yet in two of the photographs we see, flanked by portrait heads, a replica of the famous Temple menorah standing on a cupboard in the hall that leads to the sculptor's studio at Hyde Park Gate.

## Conflict Unresolved

THE POORHOUSE FAIR. By JOHN UPDIKE.  
Knopf. 185 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by DAVID FITELSON

JOHN UPDIKE, one of the more talented of the *New Yorker's* resident storytellers, has had a hearty but not very successful try at a first novel. The failure of *The Poorhouse Fair* lies largely in its adherence to established *New Yorker* conventions regarded in many quarters as rather OK. One does not mind the OK archness and urbanity that occasionally creep into Updike's prose. He has a genuine way with words and usually rises above that. Other OK things, however, are more disturbing: in particular, a rather mannered way of exploring character, and a distaste-for-the-sight-of-blood daintiness that he shares with certain other

*New Yorker* contributors (e.g., John Cheever and Harold Brodkey). Most disturbing is that *New Yorker*-like critical remoteness which enables one to be awfully aware of, say, the "ridiculous" build-up in nuclear armaments, and then (having exercised one's social conscience) to go on to chuckle at the "ridiculous" oversight of an Iowa proofreader. In being *aware* of impending perils, one is relieved of responsibility for heading them off: in being *aware* of the existence of ideas, one is absolved from thinking about them.

In Updike's book, a host of meaningful problems are paraded in the tale of a revolt of some aged poorhouse inhabitants against their rector. But somehow, before the book is ended, the problems have evaporated and we never know why.

The central issue is set forth as a conflict between the planned and the unplanned society. The rector, Conner, seeks to impose order on his charges by such means as assigning name-tagged chairs on the front porch. Asked to disclose his conception of heaven, he replies with a description of the Ideal State ("There will be no disease . . . there will be ample time for recreation.") The inmates, however, cling to a belief in a mysterious, unpredictable God, and cherish the memory of their former rector, Mendelssohn, whose authoritarianism they preferred to Conner's impersonal egalitarianism. Conner means well, but his every action creates antagonism.

The climax comes on the morning of the annual fair given by the inmates. First, it begins to rain—symbolizing disorder and the doings of that unpredictable God. The rain agitates the anarchic impulses of the inmates, and at this unpropitious moment Conner chooses to organize a work project. The inmates suddenly begin pelting him with stones. Conner comes around somewhat—he is willing to play God to the extent of "forgiving" his charges; but even this he never gets around to doing. Suddenly the sun comes out (God's in His Heaven, all's right with the world?). The fair is on: a brass band plays the old songs, the townspeople flock to the fair. Conner retires to his office to check reports, and the inmates likewise fade from the scene. The remainder of the book is mostly devoted to selections from the conversations of the townspeople—the most ordinary conversations, one supposes, that Updike could devise, and *very* funny; but the conflict between Conner and the inmates is neither continued nor resolved. It is just neglected.

This is more than a dramatic letdown. It is the sign of an inability to deal—beyond a certain point—with ideas and the problems that ideas create. Whether Updike's "failure of nerve" can properly be identified with the *New Yorker* syndrome, or whether it is symptomatic of a type of cultural failure, is, of course, debatable. But that does not make the book any better.

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#### BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

W. W. BARTLEY, III, a graduate fellow in philosophy at Harvard, reviewed *Critique of Religion and Philosophy* in our November 1958 issue.

FRANCIS GOLFFING, poet, translator, and critic, is professor of English at Bennington College and a frequent contributor.

JOEL CARMICHAEL, who reviewed *The Russian Revolution* in January, writes widely on Communism and Arab nationalism.

JEAN GARRIGUE has published verse as well as

criticism in various journals. This is her first contribution to COMMENTARY.

GEORGE LICHTHEIM, our former associate editor, writes often on world politics. His article "The Great Transformation" appeared in January.

ALFRED WERNER is an art historian and critic whose articles and reviews frequently appear in this magazine.

DAVID FITELSON, a newcomer to these pages, has written for *Partisan Review* and the *New Leader*.